The Undying Tragedy

By Wm. F. Robison, S.J.

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THE UNDYING TRAGEDY OF THE WORLD

BY

WILLIAM F. ROBISON, S.J.

ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY

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FOREWORD

The following pages contain a series of Lenten Lectures, delivered in St. Francis Xavier (College) Church during the season of 1919. In them an attempt has been made to tell the story of the sorrows and sufferings of Jesus Christ in a way as near to actual fact as possible. Of course, the gospel narrative has been carefully pondered; and recourse has been had to standard works, such as Ollivier's *The Passion,* Gallwey's *The Watches of the Passion,* Knabenbauer's Commentary in *Cursus Sacrae Scripturae,* and the like.

The subject of the Passion is inexhaustible. "Oh, Beauty, ever ancient, ever new!" was Augustine's cry of wonder as he looked up to the heights of God's excellence: a similar exclamation must spring to the lips of everyone who searches the depths of the Savior's Heart, which was riven on the cross. The Passion, from its soundless abyss, is always appealing to each Christian heart and calling forth the response of no-

bility and love. There is a strange, enthralling power in the memory of the sorrows of loved ones: the heart goes back most frequently to the scenes of sadness where dear ones have suffered, and holds fast to the bitter-sweet myrrh of their affliction. It is thus that the appreciative souls of the best of the race have yearningly lingered over the woes of the great Beloved of God and man.

Besides being the story of His sacrifice of redemption, the Passion of our Blessed Lord is also a type of the conflict between good and evil. The forces of wickedness may be regarded as symbolized in the figures of those who outraged Jesus Christ during the hour of the power of darkness. These forces have never ceased from their ruinous work in opposition to the Savior and to His Kingdom: and so, the tragedy of Calvary is unendingly continued in the Undying Tragedy of the World.

Now that men are facing a period of reorganization and reconstruction after the disasters of the stupendous world-war, it is, in the opinion of the author, especially timely to study well the adverse powers

which have part in the gigantic contest between good and evil.

The greatest effort of all good men must ever be to stand for Christ and godliness. To this end the knowledge of the purpose and of the resources of the enemy is an aid to victory; hence, this study of evil. The motive power towards generosity in regard to God is the enthusiasm of love; hence, this sympathetic review of that excess of love accomplished in Jerusalem, when the God-Man, "having loved his own who were in the world, loved them unto the end."[1]

It is in the hope that the old, old story of Christ's supreme love may kindle the ardor of Christian hearts to fight and conquer their foes and His, that these pages are given to the public. These humble efforts are laid as a tribute at the feet of Him whose Heart "has loved men so much that it has spared nothing, even to emptying itself, to show them its love."

WILLIAM F. ROBISON, S.J.

St. Louis University,
Feast of the Sacred Heart,
June 27, 1919.

[1] John XIII, 1.

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THE UNDYING TRAGEDY

CHAPTER I

JUDAS AND DISLOYALTY

"What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" Matt. XXVI, 15.

"And he that betrayed him, gave them a sign, saying: Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he." Matt. XXVI, 48.

"Hail Rabbi. And he kissed him." Matt. XXVI, 49.

"It were better for him, if that man had not been born." Matt. XXVI, 24.

The special attention which Mother Church pays to the Passion of our Blessed Lord is a well known fact. She begins her religious functions with the sacred sign of the cross marking her brow and signing the foreheads of her children. She blesses the objects that are set aside for holy purposes by tracing above them the same hallowed symbol. She crowns the spires of her temples of worship with this august

standard of her King and Spouse. And the cross is the epitome of the Passion.

Yet, whilst with its salutary warning against evil and its heavenly call to goodness of life the Passion always lives in her heart; whilst in her grateful memory it throbs with the endless thrill of appreciative love; during the holy season of Lent she broods over it, as a beloved broods over the memory of her battle-scarred lover. She counts each wound, she lingers over each bruise received in her behalf; for they are the marks of her Bridegroom's heroism, the tokens of His fidelity and unselfishness. During this hallowed time of penance and prayer the Church summons her children to tread with her more frequently and more lovingly than at other times the sad Way of the Cross; she closes this period with the veiling of statues and crucifixes; and she relives the days of monstrous hate and immeasurable love, as Holy Week's lamentations precede the Easter alleluias. Until lately it was her wont to celebrate during Lent different feasts of the Passion and of the instruments of her Spouse's sufferings; and, even though some of these feasts have

been superseded in her liturgy, the spirit of her loving remembrance remains, and she wishes the whole of Lent to be an extended Holy Week for all who love the Christ.

In a certain sense, she wishes the whole year and one's whole life to be a prolonged Lent, in so far as the memory of the Passion should never fade from the heart's grateful recollection. Her daily Mass is the unfailing memorial of the sacrifice of Calvary; her unflagging lesson is the sermon of the cross. She knows and proclaims this truth: "Surely if there had been anything better and more useful to the salvation of man than suffering, Christ would certainly have shown it by word and example." [1]

The record of the Passion of our Blessed Lord is not only the story of His sufferings of redeeming love; it is also the symbol of the Undying Tragedy of the World, the type of the struggle of the forces of evil against good and God. Christ fought all the powers of sin and hell, and He conquered in His "triumph of failure." But the evil that was killed on Calvary when He won His stupendous victory has its unholy

[1] *Imitation of Christ*, Bk. II, c. 12.

resurrection in the heart of every man and woman who treads the paths of this life. Unto the crack of doom the struggle will go on, with the power of wickedness weakened, but never absolutely vanquished until the day of God's supreme triumph in His General Judgment. Then God will conquer irresistibly and the adverse forces will be crushed unto everlasting. But meanwhile, into the lives of each of us there rush the fierce onsets of the struggle for our souls, which are the prize, as they are the battleground, of this terrible contest between Satan and Christ; in our lives there is again enacted upon a smaller stage the same tragedy whose closing scene was the cloud-wrapped, darkened, bloody plateau of Golgotha.

Therefore, the purpose of the present work is to consider the old, old story of Christ's sacrifice of atoning love, and at the same time to look at the types of evil which played their part in the terrible events whose culmination was Calvary and which still battle on in the ever-renewed drama of mankind. And the hope and the prayer which should be in our hearts is this, that,

as Christ conquered in His gigantic struggle, as God will definitely triumph at the end of this earthly span, so too we, each and all, may win in the fray that we face as we go through life.

Down at the bottom of all true nobility and solid greatness is fidelity: the tap-root of uprightness and heroic endeavor is loyalty, which cleaves to the norm of goodness and obeys the mandate of God. On the other hand, down at the bottom of all wickedness is unfaithfulness: the poisoned and poisonous source of even the most monstrous moral defections is disloyalty. Hence, in studying the forces of evil in the struggle against good and God let us begin with the consideration of this disloyalty.

Where is its type in the sorrow-flooded Passion of the Master? Alas! the whole Passion is the story of horrible disloyalty ranged against Christ's magnificent loyalty. Nowhere is loyalty to be found save in His blessed Mother, who followed Him unto the end and stood beneath the cross as He bowed His head in death; nowhere save in the love-chastened, converted sinner of Magdala, who was found worthy of a place beside

Christ's stainless Mother; nowhere save in the few like John and the devoted women and those who from afar off saw what was done on the dread hill of execution. All others were blackened with the tainted vileness of disloyalty.

The Apostles were disloyal: for, though the Master had given them permission to depart, leaving Him to tread the wine-press of sorrow alone, still they were faithless to their boast that they were "ready to go to prison and to death" [1] with Him. Peter, who was to be the foundation-stone of Christ's everlasting Church, was faithless: for, that same night which had blessed him with the heaven-like joy of his First Holy Communion and had hallowed him with the elevation to a share in the very priesthood of Christ, witnessed his cowardly denial of his Master and his cursing and swearing that he "knew not the man," [2] whom he had once gloriously confessed to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God." [3] The tribunals of the Jews and Gentiles were faithless to their bounden

[1] Luke XXII, 33; Matt. XXVI, 35.
[2] Cf. Matt. XXVI, 72. [3] Matt. XVI, 16.

duty to render justice to men. The judges were disloyal to the fundamental requirements of their high office. The rulers were untrue to the very thing for which they held the reins of government and swayed the sceptre of power. The people were recreant to the trust of heaven and to the very purpose that had made them the chosen race of God.

Truly, disloyalty seems to be the very atmosphere of the Passion. Yet within the darkness that is almost without a gleam of brightness, there is a deeper blackness; amid the forms of evil that crawl and crouch and spring upon the Christ to crush Him to His doom, foremost and most hideous is the figure of him who stands before the world as the embodiment of unworthiness and the personification of disloyalty—Judas, the Apostle who betrayed his Master, Judas the traitor.

Judas Iscariot was the son of Simon. He was the only one of the Apostles who was, like Christ Himself, a Judean; for the rest were Galileans. The Iscariot, "the man of Kerioth," must have had many noble qualities and many splendid capabilities for

true greatness; for the Master had chosen him to be one of His Apostles. For Judas there was to be the glory of preparing the people for the fuller teaching of the Christ; nay, he must have made preliminary missionary tours, when the envoys of the Master preached the coming of the Kingdom of God and returned exulting that even the demons were subject to them in the name of Jesus. His was the wondrous privilege to enjoy close intimacy with the God-Man during the days of the public ministry, to hear His teachings and to behold His miracles. His was to be the destiny of the others of the Twelve; and that was to spread the glad tidings of salvation, to "preach the gospel to every creature," [1] to witness to Jesus "in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the uttermost part of the earth," [2] to give testimony unto the heroism of blood to Him who died for men, and in the regeneration, when the Son of man would come in great power and majesty, "to sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." [3]

[1] Mark XVI, 15. [2] Acts I, 8. [3] Matt. XIX, 28.

Glorious was the destiny; propitious, the beginning. But gradually Judas fell away from what was worthy and noble. Little by little his devotedness gave place to disloyal perfidy, which ran its course from pilfering to criticism of the God-Man, to murmurings against his Master, and finally to the unspeakable treason which has branded the one-time Apostle with the mark of shame and infamy. How had the mighty fallen!

When Judas sold his Master to hating foes, had he lost faith in the Christ, or had he deceived himself with the illusive hope that Christ might, when taken, pass through the hands of His enemies as on a former occasion? Who shall say? But, it is hard to see how his faith was firm: a significant passage in the gospel according to St. John gives us reason at least to question that. A year before the cataclysm of blood the Master had promised to men, that, for the life of the world, He would give His flesh to eat and His blood to drink. Some, even of the disciples, had drawn Christ's reproach upon themselves because of the unbelief in their hard hearts: "There are some of you who believe not"; "for," says

St. John, "Jesus knew from the beginning who were they that did not believe, and who he was that would betray him."[1] And when, after the departure of those disciples who "went back and walked no more with him," Jesus had asked the Apostles whether they too would go the way of the faithless ones, and when Peter had answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we have believed and have known that thou art the Christ, the Son of God"; then "Jesus answered them: Have I not chosen you twelve: and one of you is a devil?" A devil! "Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon: for this same was about to betray him, whereas he was one of the twelve."[2]

From that day the cancer of evil was eating more deeply into Judas' soul. Shortly before the end of the ministry of mercy he murmured at Mary's wasteful extravagance, as she anointed the Master's feet with precious ointment: "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?"[3] "Now this he said,"

[1] John VI, 65.
[2] John VI, 67–72.
[3] John XII, 5.

comments St. John, "not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and having the purse carried the things that were put therein."[1] And Satan put it into his heart to sell his Master.[2] Untempted by the priests, but urged on by the great adversary, of his own accord "he went and discoursed with the chief priests and the magistrates, how he might betray him to them. And they were glad and covenanted to give him money. And he promised. And he sought opportunity to betray him."[3]

Thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave, was the gain which he preferred to his rejected Lord! Possibly the money was only a partial inducement to his treason; for the sum was wretchedly paltry. But he may have visioned other golden streams, which would flow to him in compensation for his zeal in the cause of the priests; he may have hoped to stand well with the triumphant popular party; he may have looked for further emolument in the days of his own growing importance. Thirty

[1] John XII, 6.
[2] Cf. John XIII, 2.
[3] Luke XXII, 3–6.

pieces of silver! For him the die was cast.

After this nothing could stop him in his mad, unchecked rush to destruction. In the Supper Room Christ had bowed before him in humble love and loving lowliness and had washed his feet: the Lord had not driven him with burning scorn from the Pasch which He had desired to eat with His own. Near to that Master Judas had reclined during the ceremonial supper; and then, when he had received the morsel of bread which pointed out the traitor to "the disciple whom Jesus loved,"[1] "Satan entered into him . . . and he went out immediately. And it was night."[2] Yes, it was the night of black disloyalty to the best of friends, the most loving of benefactors, the most gracious Master, the most long-suffering God. Disloyalty was hurrying on to the climax of its perfidy.

Now, from darkness let us turn to light. As Judas symbolizes disloyalty, so Christ is the type of fidelity. His whole life up to the hour in the Cenacle has been one unbroken chain of acts of loyalty to His work,

[1] John XIII, 23; cf. XXI, 7. [2] John XIII, 27, 30.

to His brethren, and to His heavenly Father. All this, however, we may pass by, to gaze in wondering awe at His loyalty as it gleams forth from now to the ending of His agony in the garden.

The few moments of peace and love in the midst of His own are past. There in the Supper Room He has made good His promise, spoken a year before at Capharnaum, whereby He pledged Himself to give His flesh for the life of the world. The first Holy Mass has been said; the first Holy Communion has been given to men; and close to the hearts of the chosen Apostles beats the great Sacred Heart of Jesus, throbbing with the love that will redeem the world. A hymn of thanksgiving is said; and then He turns His back on love and joy, and goes forth to hatred and sorrow.

Out into the cool March night the Master passes with the eleven—out into the darkness, where all the powers of sin and hell are waiting in ambush for the conflict against God's anointed. From the elevation of Mount Sion down towards the valley He takes His way. And as He walks along, He begins to be faint of heart. The moon

shines down from the depths of the blue Judean sky; but it seems so cold: the stars twinkle in the fathomless stretches; but they seem so far away and so chill. A heavy weight is pressing down upon His heart, is shattering His strength and crushing His courage; for, He begins to be afraid.[1]

Afraid! It is very strange, this fear of Christ's. He had always been the strong one. He had always spoken words of encouragement to His followers. He had commanded nature in its wildest moods, and His word had calmed the storm. He had so often withstood, all alone, the ruthless opponents of His cause and had challenged them with fearless intrepidity. He had passed through the midst of His foes and left them helpless in their fury, which would have stoned Him to death or cast Him down from the height of a precipice. He had uttered a word, and the demons had fled in terror from the bodies of the possessed. Why, but a few short moments ago He had uttered words that sounded like a call to battle: "Have confidence: I have over-

[1] Cf. Mark XIV, 33.

come the world."[1] Yet now, as He goes forth to meet the foe, He begins to lose courage and to be afraid!

We must never forget that the Blessed Christ is man as well as God. Yes, God He is, and we adore with hearts bowed down; He is "God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, consubstantial with the Father."[2] But true man too He is, with a human body and a human soul, with a human heart and human feelings, with human longings and human sympathies. And in His growing terror He will allow His divinity to influence His humanity only in such wise as to support it to bear more than a mere man could endure. His love for us has urged Him to become "tempted in all things such as we are without sin";[3] and now He drinks of the chalice of our weakness.

Oh, the pathos of that fear of Christ! Have we ever stood near one who was drawing near to the gates of the beyond and heard the weak, faltering voice tremble

[1] John XVI, 33.
[2] Nicene Creed.
[3] Heb. IV, 15.

forth the acknowledgment of the fear which sometimes comes even to the good, "I am afraid"? Christ's fear is deeper and sharper than such dread, and is more pathetic in its appeal. But back of the pathos there burns the steady flame of His undying loyalty to His mission and to His Father, there gleams the splendor of His more than martyr heroism. What though He is afraid? What though terror is rending His very heart-strings? What though His strength dissolves like water before the fierce anguish of His apprehension? Still, He does not falter: He goes on to where His Father calls Him to His work of atonement.

Unhesitating, though afraid, He goes out through the eastern gate of the city, down the slope that drops away to the brook Cedron with the heights frowning above. And back there in Jerusalem Judas is busy with the enemies of the Christ; he is gathering the cohorts of evil; he is hurrying to the consummation of his perfidy, hot with the frenzied haste that whips him on, disloyal to the Master who is faithful unto death.

Across the Cedron the sorrowful Master

marches on (it is like the charge of a forlorn hope against overwhelming odds)—on until He comes to the little garden of Gethsemani, where He has often gone to pray. He leaves eight of the Apostles near the entrance; and taking with Him Peter and James and John, the three always so close to Him in other days, He advances about a stone's throw into the garden. Here (so a tradition has it) He stands before a low grotto about thirty feet square and from twelve to fourteen feet high. "My soul is sorrowful even unto death: stay you here and watch with me," [1] are the words which tell of a suffering that would have killed Him but for the support of His divinity. "Stay you here and watch with me"; for, in this overpowering hour of His distress, help He must have, even the help of men—of those chosen three who have looked upon the unveiled splendor of the Only Begotten of God in the transcendent glory of the Transfiguration. They will be able to gaze upon His trembling weakness and to bear the shock. His growing fear is writing

[1] Matt. XXVI, 38.

its story on the drawn features of His wan face, which as the pale moonbeams fall upon it looks like the face of the dead.

The door of the grotto looms black against the starry skies, and the olive trees about it look like grim sentinels of disaster. Blackness and dread! But with unfaltering loyalty to what is willed in heaven He sends to the three Apostles a last look, giving and begging love, and He enters the opening of the grotto. From the murky depths of the cave demon forms seem to mock Him; demon hands, to stretch forth to grasp Him; demon hate, to hurl undying enmity against His quivering heart. His fear increases; His anguish deepens; and in utter misery He throws Himself full length upon the rocky floor of the cave, wrestling with the sorrow that is all but killing Him. Relief He must have. So, He turns His fear-haunted eyes heavenward and raises His trembling hands aloft to His Father.

"My Father," He pleads, "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me."[1] He had longed for this chalice, filled full with the blood-red sorrow of His atone-

[1] Matt. XXVI, 39.

ment; He had yearned for it with a desire that was like an unquenchable thirst, so that He was straitened and in pain until He should hold it fast to His lips and drain it to its last bitter drops. Yet now? "Let it pass from me." And if He had stopped there in His prayer, it would have passed; but His tremendous loyalty would have been less complete, His martyr example would have been less compelling, His victory would have been less entire. But He does not stop there; He goes on: "Nevertheless not as I will; but as thou wilt";[1] ". . . not my will, but thine be done."[2]

Yet the Father's face is turned away. Christ sees only anger in His Father's heart; and the Son of God grovels on the ground in agony, whilst the horrible tidal wave of sin rushes in upon Him. Sin encompasses the Holy One of God—the sins of all mankind! The vileness that rose heavenward and provoked God's just wrath to let loose the waters of the deluge, the nameless horrors of Sodom and Gomorrha, the unspeakable outrages of pagan Greece and Rome, of the

[1] Matt. XXVI, 39.
[2] Luke XXII, 42.

Babylons of the past and of the days to come—sin upon sin, wave after wave of loathsomeness wrap Him round and enfold Him. And—God help us!—we are not guiltless of all this. We stood over Him and heaped our transgressions upon the seething waters of defilement: we pushed Him down deeper into the black flood, as His sinless soul groaned forth the words, "I have come into the depth of the sea, and a tempest hath overwhelmed me." [1]

The sins of all mankind are upon Him; for, "the Lord hath laid down upon him the iniquities of us all." [2] They are upon Him—oh, ineffable horror!—as if He had been guilty of them all; as if His trembling hands were red with all the murders from the killing of Abel to the last deed of violence done before the end of days; as if His quivering lips, which are straining forth His cry of loyal acceptance of His chalice of pain, were defiled with all the blasphemies and obscenities and revilings that have broken the harmony of creation; as if His all but bursting heart were buried beneath all the injustice

[1] Ps. LXVIII, 3.
[2] Isaias LIII, 6.

and impiety and pride and impurity that have made a charnel house of God's fair world. No wonder He grovels there in agony, stricken by God as if He were the personification of evil and the incarnation of sin. No wonder the drawn lines about His temples and haggard lips deepen and quiver. No wonder the first pink blushing of blood mantles his brow and tinges His cheeks and darkens His palsied hands.

With a sigh of anguish He rises and goes out to His Apostles, only to find them sleeping. But across the torrent of Cedron, back there in the city of David, sleep is not master of His oncoming enemies. Judas does not sleep; the priests do not sleep; the hangers-on of the palace do not sleep. They are marshalling their forces; they are ordering their plans; they are ready to take the road out from the darkened city, when the hour shall have come that shall sound the first note of their hating triumph.

"Could you not watch one hour with me?"[1] This tenderly pathetic appeal is Christ's only reproof for the fickle weakness of the Apostles. But His next words sound

[1] Matt. XXVI, 40.

the trumpet call of victorious loyalty for all men as they face the ways of life: "Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."[1] By the heroic loyalty of the weakened Christ, may we learn the lesson! May we make honest efforts to avoid wrong-doing, and may we send up unceasing appeals to God for His help, so as to stand true to Him in all the attacks of foes from without and of weakness from within!

Back again the Savior goes to the grotto, tottering toward the second martyrdom of His gigantic fidelity. Once more He prays, "saying the same words."[2] And the apprehension of all that lies before Him ere tomorrow's sun shall have sunk behind the western hills rushes upon Him with its combined horror of infamy and pain. Must He be betrayed by one of His own? And must He be dragged in disgraceful bonds through the streets of the city which but five days before had rung with the glad hosannas that welcomed the Son of David to the city of

[1] Matt. XXVI, 41.
[2] Mark XIV, 39.

David? And must He be condemned of blasphemy by the highest religious authority in the land? And must He be put even lower than a brigand murderer? And must He be scourged and crowned with thorns and rejected by His people? And must He be sentenced to death and bear His cross and be nailed to the gibbet and die upon the tree of shame? Oh, Father, must this be? "My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, thy will be done." [1]

And down Sion's slope there move the dark forms of many marchers. The muffled murmur of many voices is breaking upon the still air. The flashing of lanterns and the gleam of swords in the flare of torches slash the darkness of night. And in the midst of the leaders is Judas, coming on to the accomplishment of his fell purpose.

For the third time, after another visit to His sleeping Apostles, back to the grotto the weary Master drags His fainting steps, to pray again to the Father whose face is turned away. The unbearable load of sin, which nevertheless He must carry, the craz-

[1] Matt. XXVI, 42.

ing thought of the uncounted woes before Him—all this must have made His sad thoughts turn to those for whom He suffers. Men! What have so many of them ever done from the day when they were placed upon this earth, but outrage the divine love that yearned over them? Is it worth while to endure a very orgy of torture for such as these? How many of them in the days to come will but damn themselves the deeper into hell because He died for them! Is it worth while? And His great heart answers, Yes, it is worth while: it is worth while to do the will of the Father; it is worth while to save the least of the children of men; it is worth while to be loyal to the end.

So fierce is the effort of His strong resistance to feeble, faltering nature, that the blood is forced from the pores of His body, soaks the garments that He wears, and reddens the rocky floor of the grotto where He prays. "And being in an agony he prayed the longer, and his sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground."[1]

In the midst of His sorrow He is consoled

[1] Luke XXII, 43, 44.

by the ministration of one of the angelic spirits; and being comforted, He rises up. Past is His hour of almighty weakness, endured for us that His weakness by touching our weakness may make us stronger than ourselves. Henceforth He will meet without flinching all that lies ahead before the angry sunset of tomorrow. "Rise," He says to His Apostles, as He wakes them from their shaming slumber, "Rise, let us go: behold he is at hand who will betray me."[1]

And nearer and nearer up the incline of Mount Olivet there comes the roar of an approaching mob; lights flash amidst the trees that clothe the hillside; soldiers and servants and priests and officers stop at the entrance of the garden to put some order into the confusion of their ranks. The words of command are rehearsed; for there must be no mistake as the decisive moment draws near. The sign which will make assurance doubly sure is whispered into the ears of the leaders of the mob by him who skulks in their midst—by the "thief," the "devil," Judas Iscariot. The Christ moves

[1] Matt. XXVI, 46.

onward with His followers, as Judas steps forward to complete his deed of evil; and the Master and the recreant Apostle stand face to face.

Does the memory of all that Christ has done for him rush into Judas' soul and paralyze his limbs? He halts confused and silent. "Whom seek ye?" says Christ to the mob. Still silent, Judas? Where is the sign? The crowd, looking uneasily at Judas, says: "Jesus of Nazareth." "I am he," declares the Savior; and at the words of majesty of this forsaken Man they (at least the front ranks) are stricken prostrate to the earth. Again He asks: "Whom seek ye?" Oh, they know Him now, even if they did not know Him before; but like frightened children again they stammer: "Jesus of Nazareth."[1] The sign, Judas! Where is the sign? And the wretched traitor, with a sudden stiffening of his resolution to do quickly what he has come to do, steps forward. He advances to the Christ; he places his hands upon the Master's shoulders; he dares to lay his

[1] Cf. John XVIII, 4–7.

traitor lips upon the Master's cheek. "Hail Rabbi" [1]—and he kisses Him!

He kisses Him! Disloyalty prostitutes the sacred sign of love, that loyalty may be delivered into the hands of hating foes. And Christ allowing His enemies to work their will, because He chooses to drink the chalice which the Father has given Him to drink, His foes rush forward; and, in a fury that would make amends to themselves for their discomfiture in presence of this abandoned Victim, they bind Him securely and take their way back to the city. Not with shouts of triumph do they go, but silently, as if slinking away from a deed of blood (for they fear the people still); and Christ takes the first steps towards the consummation of the morrow that will live unto the endless ages of eternity.

There is the compelling contrast: Christ and Judas, loyalty and disloyalty. Through loyalty one is true to self, true to the neighbor, true most of all to God. Judas in his disloyalty was false to all of these. False he was to the God-given lean-

[1] Matt. XXVI, 49.

ings to what is noble and worthy; false to his neighbor, especially to Him who had been to him the most considerate Master, the most faithful friend, the most lavish benefactor; false to God, the firm foundation of all loyalty.

After the betrayal and capture of Christ, back to the city went Judas, mingling with the crowd. Was his head held high in the consciousness of laudable accomplishment? Surely the worm of remorse must have already begun its gnawing at his tortured soul: surely the spectre of his monstrous perfidy must have been stalking before him with the taunt that would not be silenced. Later he saw the Christ rough-handled by the cruelty of unfeeling brutes; he heard the sentence of death pronounced by Israel's highest authority; he rushed to the priests, groaning the soul-racked cry that he had sinned in betraying innocent blood. And then he outraged the Master more foully than he had done when he sold Him to His foes; for he gave free rein to the wild orgy of despair. Before, he had attacked the liberty of Christ: in his final defection he spurned the attribute which is the crown of

Christ's humanity and the centre of Christ's divinity—His loving mercy. Whosoever denies the mercy of God toward the repentant sinner, denies the Godhead itself. That was Judas' last crime, the climax of his disloyalty. In the utter abandon of despair he "went and hanged himself with a halter";[1] and his wretched, sin-stained soul was called in judgment before the Christ, to whom "the Father hath given power to do judgment because he is the Son of man."[2]

Then was disloyalty judged by loyalty itself; for Christ is loyalty itself. He was ever true to Himself, to the peerless manhood in which He is the paragon of humanity. He was true to His neighbor, even to the traitor, whom in the hour of the accomplishment of treason he called friend, "Friend, whereto art thou come?"[3] "Judas, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?"[4] He was true to the heavenly Father, to whose will He clung unto the bloody agony of torture on the floor of Gethsemani's grotto.

[1] Matt. XXVII, 5.
[2] John V, 27.
[3] Matt. XXVI, 50.
[4] Luke XXII, 48.

As we look on these two figures, as opposed as life and death; as we shrink back in horror from the hideous disloyalty of Judas and glow with love for the tender and pathetic, yet strong and heroic, fidelity of Christ; let us give thought to our own loyalty in its three main aspects.

First of all, we must be true to ourselves; for this is the beginning of uprightness. The poet was right when he said:

> "To thine own self be true,
> And it must follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man."[1]

At the basis of morality lies the fact, that we are acting well when we do such things as are in accordance with our God-given nature, not in its unworthy longings, not in its disorderly instincts to place the animal above the rational, not in the perversion which would call human the leanings that are common to man with the brute; but with that nature of ours which is rational, in which the higher powers should rule the lower, which is essentially equal with the nature of our fellow humans, and which, by

[1] *Hamlet*, Act. I, Scene III.

reason of its very essence, should forever and irrevocably be subject to the sovereignty of God. To be true to ourselves in this sense, is to work out the plan of God in our regard and to bring ourselves to the summit of earthly well-being, which shall merge into the endless perfection of eternal happiness in heaven. To be false to ourselves is to disturb the order of God's creation, to brand ourselves with the mark of sin's perfidy, to disgrace the manhood that was meant for things high and noble, to blast the dignity of our human nature. Of a truth, we ourselves are the standard of what is good in our regard; but the binding force which holds us to fidelity to this norm is above and beyond us; it is the will of our almighty Lord and Master.

True to ourselves, we must and shall be true to others, "Thou canst not then be false to any man"; for the same norm directs and the same will prescribes loyalty to our neighbor. Loyalty to the neighbor demands that we be faithful to promises, just in giving to every man what is rightfully his, charitable and considerate beyond the requirements of justice. If all men were

conspicious for this loyalty to their fellows, this world of ours would be rejuvenated. Then a war, like the stupendous world-struggle of the past four years and a half, would never have ravaged the beauty of earth and crushed mankind with the red savagery of battle; and peace, based on justice and liberty, would forever gladden the nations.

But, finally, the firm ground on which loyalty to ourselves and to our neighbor must rest is unshaken loyalty to God. He is the Beginning and the End; He is the Lord and Master; He is, as His loving revelation has shown Him to us, the Father of His children. To be true to His sublime excellence, faithful to His supreme lordship, loyal to His fatherly affection—this is the ideal which should thrill our souls and urge us on to heroism of effort.

Neglect God and our religious duties which profess our subjection to Him? That were disloyalty. Scorn His revelation and pass it by in indifference or, perhaps, in positive contempt? That were perfidy. Stand out against Him as He thunders His mandates in the power of His

omnipotence or whispers His commands in the tender pleadings of love unutterable? That were treason. Yes, all grievous sin is not only the perversion of our greatness and the disgrace of our human nature; it is not only the pestilential hot-house of dissension with one's fellows, of injustice toward one's neighbors, of unfaithfulness to one's comrades: it is also the turning away from God and the blasting of the soul with the baseness which appalls the world in the arch-traitor Judas, the fallen Apostle.

Need I voice the call to unalterable loyalty? Need I urge you, and myself with you, to fly the foul shame of disloyalty? In words that ring down the ages the call and the urging have been spoken by the events which we have been considering. Their compelling force is incomparable. Let us keep before our souls' vision two pictures, and they are these:

The first? There on the floor of the blood-stained grotto lies the Son of God, writhing in killing agony, battling the might of sin and hell. His face is drawn with the lines which suffering has engraved upon the features of Him who was the fairest of

the sons of men: His eyes are gaunt with the shadows that have been left there by the dark vision of evil: His members are quivering with the weakness of unbearable apprehension and fear: His garments are soaked with the blood of the heart-tearing struggle. But He rises and goes forth to meet His doom with a smile upon His haggard lips and a thrill in His all but breaking heart. He has faced the issue; He has fought the fight; He has conquered the faintness of shrinking nature. And His battle cry has already been flung to the air of heaven, as He has whispered: "Father, thy will be done!"

And the other picture? There in the shadows of the valley a lonely tree stands out in grim desolation. It bears upon its bough a ghastly fruit—the fruit of treason and disloyalty. Oh, the distorted face; the staring eyes, fixed on the horror that will never die; the protruding entrails; the rigid body at the end of the halter, swaying, swaying in the fitful breeze; and, like the mocking cry of taunting demons, the echo of the words, "Hail, Rabbi! I kissed Him!"

Which do we wish to symbolize our lives?

Which do we wish to tell the story of our days? Is it to be disloyalty or fidelity for us? Please God! the question is answered in the asking. True to ourselves, faithful to our fellows, loyal to our God—the watchword of our lives, "Thy will be done!"

CHAPTER II

THE SANHEDRIM AND DUPLICITY

"For envy they had delivered him." Matt. XXVII, 18.

"It is expedient . . . that one man should die for the people." John XI, 50.

"He hath blasphemed. . . . He is worthy of death." Matt. XXVI, 65, 66.

"We have found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that he is Christ the King." Luke XXIII, 2.

"He ought to die because he made himself the Son of God." John XIX, 7.

We are looking at the forces of evil which were ranged against our Blessed Lord in His terrible Passion, and which are drawn up in opposition to good and God in the tragedy that will last until time shall be no more. We have already considered disloyalty with its perversion of all that is noble. Its monstrous embodiment we found in the traitor Apostle, Judas, of whom the God-Man said: "It were better for him, if that man had not been born."[1] And as a

[1] Matt. XXVI, 24.

splendid contrast to this vision of wickedness we have studied Christ's unswerving fidelity to His appointed mission, His absolute loyalty to the will of His heavenly Father.

Let us proceed to treat of another power for evil, which often leads to the wretchedness of disloyalty, and which numbers its victims by uncounted millions. This is insincerity, double-dealing, crookedness, craftiness—in a word, duplicity. This duplicity is appalling in its ruinous effectiveness; for it thwarts God's hallowed designs in many souls, whether it be rampant in its most loathsome form of hypocrisy, or disguised in its more subtle manifestations of half-conscious or almost unconscious double-dealing.

The baseness of duplicity is thrown into more despicable prominence by the appealing nobility of straightforwardness. We admire and extol simplicity and candid truth, which are the shining heritage of unspoiled human nature; nor do we hesitate to echo the words of the homely verse which says that

"An honest man, though e'er so poor,
Is king of men, for a' that!"[1]

Would that our emulation of the glory of the sincere and simple and straightforward were as strenuous as our admiration is unfeigned!

Our dear Lord voiced His approbation of our judgment about duplicity and simplicity, when He said: "If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome; but if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome";[2] "Let your speech be yea, yea; no, no."[3] It was as if He had said: "Let your soul look straight to duty, right up to God; let your tongue declare your thoughts without guile or deceit; let your actions aim full at the mark of obligation, and drive to the bull's-eye of truth and honest uprightness." Thus Christ commends our native appreciation of simple sincerity; thus He seconds our contempt for the mean littleness of duplicity. And the unparalleled heroism of the example of His whole life echoes the lesson of His words.

[1] Robert Burns.
[2] Matt. VI, 22.
[3] Matt. V, 37.

Where in Christ's Passion shall we find a type or embodiment of duplicity? In the "chief priests and the ancients," the "scribes and Pharisees," the members of the Sanhedrim and those who were its masters. Hypocrites they were; and the Christ had boldly called them by their name.[1] Blind they were and the leaders of the blind; and the gentle Master had branded them with the infamy which was theirs by reason of their wilful exclusion of the light.[2] Tricky they were and deceitful, cloaking under the show of zeal for the Law their mad resolve to crush their victim, prostituting justice under the forms of judicial trial, making a farce of official investigation. Without a doubt, in their war against the single-minded Christ they symbolized duplicity in its most hideous aspect. As Judas stands for disloyalty, the Sanhedrim stands for duplicity.

Their crafty double-dealing is evident in their persecution of the Master. Their hatred of Him had waxed stronger, as the years of the public ministry ran on; the

[1] Cf. Matt. XV, 7.
[2] Cf. Matt. XV, 14.

clouds of the storm of malice had grown thicker and blacker, as glad hosannas triumphantly welcomed His entry into Jerusalem and the news of the raising of Lazarus from the tomb glorified Him. They feared that their power was slipping away from them.

"What do we, for this man doth many miracles? If we leave him alone so, all will believe in him; and the Romans will come and take away our place and nation."[1] "And they consulted together that by subtilty" (by fraud and craft, *dolo*) "they might apprehend Jesus and put him to death."[2] "But . . . Caiaphas . . . said to them: . . . It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."[3]

Their venomous envy was the reason why they hated Him; yet the charge under which they condemned Him was that of blasphemy, and the charges which they urged against Him before Pilate were those of sedition and treason to Rome. It was all dissem-

[1] John XI, 47, 48.
[2] Matt. XXVI, 4.
[3] John XI, 49, 50.

bling, hypocrisy, double-dealing, craftiness. But the inmost heart of their duplicity was shown in the injustice of the trials in which they tried to cover up the traces of their blinded envious hate. Let us look at these trials, in which justice became a mockery; examination, a farce; the most venerated judicial body of the Jews, the tool of bloody handed murderers to crush their prey.

Down the slope of Olivet and up the hill that led to Jerusalem Christ was dragged, as a bound prisoner, to face—not yet the Sanhedrim, but him who was the master of the master of the Sanhedrim. "And they led him away to Annas first; for he was the father-in-law to Caiaphas who was the high priest of that year." [1] Here was the beginning of injustice; for Annas, not being the official high priest, had no legal authority in the case. But he was the hand behind the puppet, the power behind the throne; he was the very head and front of the opposition against Christ Jesus.

Annas was of the priestly line, and some of the Jews looked upon him alone as possessing the real right to the high-priesthood.

[1] John XVIII, 13.

High priest he had been; but when he was deposed by the Romans, he made no open opposition. He only smiled and smiled, and was the oily villain still. He had been preceded in the office by his son; he was succeeded by creatures of his own; and now his son-in-law, Caiaphas, occupied the important post and had done so for ten years. But the wily old strategist was still in power, and even Caiaphas would not dare to say him nay. So, Christ was led before Annas, that the crafty old plotter might gloat over his victim and warm the cold springs of his heart by gazing upon his prey. Yes, all had gone well thus far! But a little more cunning managing—and this Man would be disgraced before the world; the people would no more go after Him; and thus the Romans, with no cause for complaint, would be satisfied with honeyed words and golden tribute; and Annas would be ruler of Jerusalem, a king in all but name.

Christ, then, stood before Annas, and Annas "asked Jesus of his disciples and his doctrine."[1] Was it to learn the truth? Far from it. It was duplicity pursuing its

[1] John XVIII, 19.

tortuous way of deceit. It was to gain time for the hurried gathering of the Sanhedrim; and meanwhile it was to glow at the prospect of assured victory, and, if might be, to extort some word from the prisoner which devilish craft might turn against Him. Out against the blackness of Annas' double-dealing Christ's sincerity and straightforward simplicity shine like a star against the murky night.

He had been asked about His disciples and His doctrine. About His disciples He could not just then say much that was good. One of them had betrayed Him, after selling Him to His enemies; that very night another, the chief one of the Twelve, would deny that he knew his Lord and Master; and all the rest, in spite of their brave protestation that they would abide with Him to the end, had fled away and left Him alone in the power of His foes. No, He could not say much that was good about His disciples; and so, the dear Lord said nothing. An example for a gossiping and scandalmongering world!

But about the second part of the question, as to His doctrine, there was no need for

silence. Straight from the heart of truth He spoke; straight to the heart of truth He went: "Why askest thou me? Ask them who have heard what I have spoken to them."[1] Thus He laid bare the duplicity of His questioner, by reminding him that it was the part of a judge, not to ask ensnaring questions, but to see that proof was adduced. At these words of single, simple honesty, a servant standing by, to curry favor with his discomfited master, acted out some more hypocritical pretence; and, in feigned respect for outraged authority, gave Christ a blow in the face, saying: "Answerest thou the high priest so?"[2] "Jesus answered him: If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil"; accuse me; prove your charge against me; "but if well, why strikest thou me?"[3]

Hardened as Annas was, he had to feel this rebuke to his own misuse of his position and to the uncorrected brutality of his minion. If the brow of man could still

[1] John XVIII, 21.
[2] John XVIII, 22.
[3] John XVIII, 23.

crimson to the blush of honest shame, he had to be covered with confusion. To extricate himself from the annoyance, there remained but one thing to do—and that one thing he did. He sent Christ away to Caiaphas, the high priest,[1] to face His prearranged condemnation.

And so Christ passed from before Annas. Never again did the Master stand alone before the cruel plotter. It was the passing of Christ, the passing away of the last call to grace, which Annas in his madness rejected. May we never allow double-dealing with God to harden our hearts against the call of grace! If we do, the angel of mercy may pass us by, to return with the sword of God's vengeance in his hand. Alas for Annas! when Christ was led from before his presence to another part of the palace, where Caiaphas and the hastily summoned members of the Sanhedrim were waiting to continue the farce of justice and the work of duplicity.

Christ before the Sanhedrim on trial for His life! In cases of a capital nature, it

[1] Cf. John XVIII, 24.

must be noted, the Jewish and rabbinical laws required that investigation should first be made into the things which might prove the accused free from the guilt of crime. For this purpose witnesses had first to be sought who might testify in his favor. Only after this were the witnesses against him to be heard. Moreover, these witnesses were to be warned of the seriousness of the matter in hand; their uprightness was to be established before they were admitted to speak; they were to be impressed with the gravity of saying anything false, nay, of saying anything which they knew only by hearsay, even though their informant were a man of the highest integrity. After all this, they were to be brought into the judgment-chamber one by one to give their testimony before the judges, in such a way that the second witness might not hear what the first had said. Meanwhile, scribes carefully took down every word, and if the witnesses did not agree in their depositions, their testimony was thrown out. Finally, after the witnesses had been heard and examined the votes of the judges were gathered, and if the sentence on the accused

was one of condemnation, it might not be pronounced until the following day.[1]

These requirements of the rabbinical law may not all have held good in the days of our Blessed Lord, though most of them must have been extant, since they are demanded by natural justice. But in Christ's case they were violated, one and all; and His trial was the riotous anarchy of injustice masquerading under the garb of right.

So, Jesus was arraigned before the grand council, the Sanhedrim. This tribunal was gloried in by the Jews and admired by the nations; but from this day forth it would be disgraced forever. There was the president of the council, Caiaphas the high priest; there was Annas with the others who were his creatures, as was the chief of the court; there were the scribes and the ancients. They wore the mask of disinterested judges and pious guardians of the Law of Jahve. But, with a few exceptions, they were a pack of ravening wolves, thirsting for the blood of the Innocent One before them, chafing within themselves because they had to hide their panting hate beneath

[1] Cf. *Cursus SS.*, Knabenbauer, *In Matt.*, II, p. 468.

the guise of unselfishness and gloss over a deed of blood with the appearance of justice.

The Sadducees (and most of the priests were of these sensualists) would have none of Christ, because they were satisfied with the temporal advantages which accrued to them from compromises with Rome. The Pharisees were fanatics, clinging to the perverted ideal of an earthly political Kingdom of God, which should raise Israel to the peak of material grandeur, with the kings of the world cowering in cringing dread beneath their feet. But this Man menaced the realization of the dreams of both Sadducees and Pharisees. So, "Away with him!" But the people were thronging after Him. Then, must He be put to death. Thus they had determined before they began His present trial: yet, though His sentence was fixed, they tried Him. Duplicity gone mad; double-dealing rushing on to horrible sacrilege; hypocrisy enthroned and worshiped as the master of their souls!

As has been said, the law required that, first of all, witnesses should be called in who might testify in favor of the accused.

Where were they? Where were those who had been healed of their diseases by Christ's miraculous power? Where were those who had followed Him out into the desert, forgetful of the wants of nature? Where were those who, but five days before, had strewn palm branches in His path and welcomed the Son of David to the city of David with the loud hosannas of exulting triumph? Were all these grown basely and utterly craven, even before the stigma of public condemnation had blasted Christ's fair name in the minds of the fickle? No such favoring witnesses were sought out: none such would have been admitted to this chamber of predetermined death. For, these judges (!) held counsel "that they might put Jesus to death." [1]

Passing by any who might have testified in behalf of the Christ, the Sanhedrists brought in witnesses against Him. In the depths of their dissembling souls the members of the council knew that they could obtain no true testimony of a real crime against Jesus of Nazareth; for, long before this, He had triumphantly challenged them

[1] Matt. XXVI, 4.

to find aught of evil in His doctrine or His life, and had said: "Which of you shall convince me of sin?"[1] And these pledged supporters of justice, these plighted guardians of right, these official shepherds of the people of God suborned false witnesses, that the web of death might be woven around the prisoner who was condemned before He was brought to trial.

But, in spite of all, nothing could be brought forward which would give any color of justice to a sentence of death. In face of this failure Caiaphas raged within himself. Was Christ to escape, unless the mask were dropped and hypocrisy stood forth in its naked horror? And the high priest's eyes stealthily glanced at the hard, cruel face of Annas. If witnesses had failed, Christ Himself must furnish the grounds of condemnation. So, turning to the prisoner, the false-hearted judge addressed Him: "Answereth thou nothing to the things which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace."[2] He would not answer these men who had

[1] John VIII, 46.
[2] Matt. XXVI, 62.

blinded their souls to the light of truth; nor was there any rhyme or reason in answering "the things which these witnessed against" Him. The cheeks of Caiaphas, flushed hot with the fierce hatred within his heart, burned redder yet, as the watchful eyes of Annas, his crafty master, pierced his servile soul. No answer from the accused? Then, must He be forced to speak and to voice His own destruction.

Was it the cunning of Annas which had suggested the means to be resorted to in the last extremity? Perhaps. Caiaphas rose from his seat at the head of the assembly; and, with all the authority that could be crowded into his words, he said: "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us if thou be the Christ, the Son of God."[1] The adjuration was framed with devilish skill. If, after this solemn adjuration in the name of the living God, Christ refused to answer, He could be crushed as one who disregarded the majesty of Jahve. Yes, He must answer; and His reply would have the force of an oath-bound declaration.

What would the answer be? Should He

[1] Matt. XXVI, 63.

say that He was not the Christ, they would condemn Him as a seducer of the people who had claimed to be the Son of God; should He declare that He was the Son of the living God, they would cry out against Him for His blasphemy. What would the answer be? In view of Christ's absolute sincerity and candor, there could be no question of a refusal to answer and no doubt as to the answer itself. His mission and His Sonship to the Father He had proclaimed with growing clearness, as the souls of men were prepared for the full disclosure of His dignity. Now He rejoiced that the hour had come, when in the hearing of the supreme religious tribunal of the people of God He could make His solemn profession of His divine Sonship.

As Caiaphas' question rang out through the marble hall and was succeeded by a silence vibrant with emotion, the quick, angry, gasping breathing of the questioner might almost be heard. Christ raised His eyes to the face of the high priest and cast a glance at His judges' set countenances, hard with hypocrisy and hate—and He read

His doom of death. But what was condemnation to the solemn declaration of all that He was? What was death to fidelity? There was no shifting of attitude, no shirking of responsibility, no attempt at evasion, no trace of duplicity in the brave, simple, straightforward Master. "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the blessed God?"[1] "Thou hast said it:[2] I am.[3] Nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven."[4]

A gleam of satisfaction lighted up the face of Caiaphas: he almost heaved a sigh of relief. At last! at long last! he had triumphed! But still duplicity must rule: still hypocrisy must hold sway. His breast was heaving high with the joy of victory; yet he must dissemble his gladness under the veil of horrified indignation at the insult offered to God's supreme majesty. "Then the high priest rent his garments, saying: He hath blasphemed; what further need

[1] Mark XIV, 61.
[2] Matt. XXVI, 64.
[3] Mark XIV, 62.
[4] Matt. XXVI, 64.

have we of witnesses?"[1] He hath blasphemed! And in the law of Jahve it was written: "He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying let him die."[2] He hath blasphemed! "Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy: what think you? But they answering said: He is guilty of death."[3] And by the Sanhedrim, the highest religious authority of the Jewish people, Christ was condemned to death for blasphemy.

Hypocrisy and duplicity had conquered. The Sanhedrists, as has been seen, sought Christ's death because of their envy towards Him and because they feared that His position might diminish their own worldly prominence; but they glossed over their foul perjury of heart with the semblance of zeal for God's honor. Truly, as David said, "iniquity hath lied to itself,"[4] and it continued to lie.

Their iniquity lied to itself in act, when it outraged every civilized nation's sense of justice, which shows consideration, if not

[1] Matt. XXVI, 65.
[2] Levit. XXIV, 16.
[3] Matt. XXVI, 65, 66.
[4] Ps. XXVI, 12.

pity, to the condemned criminal and leaves him in peace until he faces the black hour of his fate. But they showed neither pity nor consideration. On the contrary, they gave Christ into the hands of the hangers-on of the palace, and may themselves have mingled with the riotous revelers, who during the weary watches of the rest of the night vented their diabolical vileness upon Him. "And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to buffet him and to say unto him: Prophesy: and the servants struck him with the palms of their hands." [1]

Their iniquity lied to itself in words. For, when they haled Christ before the pagan governor, they did not accuse Him of blasphemy against God, the charge under which they had condemned Him; but perfidiously accused Him of sedition and treason to Rome. Later, in face of His manifest innocence, repeatedly declared by Pilate, they were forced back to their charge of blasphemy; and from that they shifted to the threat of Cæsar's wrath against the Procurator, if he should dare to thwart their revengeful desires.

[1] Mark XIV, 65.

The sight of the deep debasement and utter defilement to which they sank might lead one to despair of the possibility of human nature ever rising from the abyss, were it not for the vision of the sublime, majestic nobility of the Christ, sincere and simple and single in purpose and act—the glory of our fallen race and our Salvation.

Does the vileness of the duplicity of the Sanhedrim fill us with loathing? Does the splendor of the straightforwardness of the Master arouse our enthusiasm? God grant it! We do hate hypocrisy; we do detest double-dealing; we do abhor duplicity: and God be praised that we do! Let us hate it all yet more and keep it from our lives. The number of those who are exact copies of the faithless, hypocritical Sanhedrists may be comparatively small, and there may be but little danger that we shall descend to such depths of infamy as theirs. But the degrees of half-conscious or almost unconscious dishonesty and devious conduct are not at all outside the lives of countless multitudes. In fact, it may be said with truth, that probably the only completely honest and straightforward souls in

the whole wide world are the saints of God, canonized and uncanonized. Nearly everybody else is affected by some touch of duplicity, by some milder form of self-deception, which leads to what is unworthy.

The saints look full to duty—and follow it: they go straight to God, no matter what obstacle bars the path. Their "eye is single"; and it is largely due to this singleness of mind and heart that they are saints and that their "whole body is lightsome." They are not injured in their spiritual sight from the endeavor to keep two diverging objects within the range of their souls' vision. Still less are they blind in the midst of the brightness of the shining sun. They see, and they see straight: they are honest with God, with their fellow men, and with themselves; and in this simplicity they march on in sunshine or in storm without swerving from the path of uprightness. They have learned the secret of the courage of the outraged Christ. They have found the source of the strength that has made them stronger than themselves, stronger than the assaults of hell, stronger than the seductions of a world that knows not God.

For our souls' sake and for the sake of the Blessed Master we must emulate them in their sincerity. In view of this a little self-examination will not be at all amiss. Are we without any taint of duplicity? It should be borne in mind that there is no reference just now to out-and-out hypocrisy and to conscious double-dealing, but to lack of complete candor as to self, the neighbor, and God Himself. Are we quite free from this latter stain?

If we are, one need not have the slightest hesitation in saying that we are either worthy of execration, as being like the demons, or worthy of the reverence that accrues to the chosen ones of God. Now, of course, it is clear that we are not devils. So, if we are altogether exempt from the touch of almost unconscious duplicity, we must be advancing along the way of sanctity like giants running a race. But, are we? True is the adage that "people like to be duped" ("like to be fooled," the saying has it); and truer still is the assertion that unnumbered multitudes of men and women are dupes of their own making.

Self-deception is lamentably wide-spread;

and poor human nature would rather hide its unworthy impulses under hypocritical pretence than face the naked vileness of its own meanness. Some there are, who, whilst they give free rein to the lowest panderings to passion, will prate about the necessity of satisfying the tendencies of nature, and will argue that God would not have given the yearning, if He did not mean the yearning to be satisfied. But, without further pursuing the consideration of this sordid fallacy, which is almost too vile to touch; how many there are, who will be swept along unresisting by the flood of blinded anger, and salve their souls with the assurance that it is only zeal for truth and uprightness! The bitterness of mean resentment will poison the sweetness of association with others; and it is called justice. Pride will wrap its cold folds about a man; and he soothes himself with the comforting thought that it is only self-respect. Looseness of speech and manner will hurry him into the ways of pagan thought and action; and he tells himself that he is only avoiding narrowness and the squeamishness of a scrupulous weakling. A cringing fear will make

him an arrant coward in the face of a false human-respect; and he dignifies his craven feebleness with the name of considerateness.

It is thus that Judas may have duped his blinded soul, until the horror of his crime tore the bandage from his startled eyes: it is thus that the Sanhedrists may have deceived themselves, until they brought on themselves the sacrilege of the shedding of the blood of the Incarnate God.

Besides this cheating of oneself, duplicity goes on to the attempt to deceive in one's relations with others. It tries to cloak a fell purpose under the show of uprightness, to mask injustice under the appearance of justice, to disguise dishonor under the seeming of honor. Of a truth, the sad example of the Sanhedrim is followed today by many, albeit the craftiness is not, perhaps, so conscious. Look at the anti-religious agitators of the world, and behold a duplicity like that of the faithless ones who outraged the Christ. Under the watchword of freedom they raised aloft the banner of attack against religion and morality. In France and Mexico they assaulted what they called clericalism; but the object of their insidious

onset was religion itself. "Secularize the schools" was the shibboleth of others; and that cry translated meant: "Do away with faith and worship; tear down the standards of morality" (which can be upheld only by the strong will of Almighty God); "exalt man to absurd heights, to cast him down into unsoundable depths; and let loose upon the world a horde of godless men and women, who will riot in their lusts and sink into unspeakable degradation."

Duplicity? Even during the conduct of the war that was trying men's souls, double-dealing miscreants were abroad under the disguise of patriotism, driving the poisoned dart of religious dissension into a nation's heart. With the motto of liberty and justice upon their lips they hypocritically declared that Catholics could not be loyal because of their faith. And when the magnificent fidelity of the sons of the Church had forced that lie down their throats, duplicity essayed to read into the whole-souled response to the call of country an attempt to seize upon the military power of the land in favor of a foreign potentate!

Duplicity? Look at the Bolshevist

hordes across the sea—workmen who would not work, soldiers who would not fight, except against the helpless and defenceless, as they did in Russia. There and elsewhere—yes, here in our own fair land, where the anarchistic elements are simmering before a great explosion, they prattle of liberty, when they mean license; of equality, when they yearn for the subjugation and exploitation of others; of fraternity, when they aspire to the oppression of the forces of order; of "living one's own life," when they look to the orgies of free-love.

Duplicity? Look at the arrogant and pampered parasites of luxury, who are laying the train for the Bolshevists to light. They flatter themselves that they are the conservative element of the country and boast that they stand for the principles of law and order. Yet their barbaric extravagance before the very eyes of the agonizing struggles of pauperism is fanning the fires of discontent. Their defiant assumption of right, because they have the might of money, is embittering the hearts of the subjugated proletariat. (This assumption of theirs, it must be borne in mind, is only another form

of the godless axiom which brought the nations to the throes of death in the gigantic world-war.) They calmly extort unjustifiable profits from the necessities of their country or from the needs of their fellow men. They grind men down to the degradation of mere machines. They coin the life blood of the poor into the wealth which is the support of their luxuriousness and the staff of their pride. And, with these crimes to their account, they pose as philanthropists, whilst their own excesses are in large measure the cause or the occasion of the miseries which they condescend to relieve. What is all this but duplicity gone mad? Are such persons honest in their convictions? If they are, they afford a horrible example of the extent to which half-conscious or almost unconscious deception can blind its victims. But, consciously, or unconsciously, "iniquity hath lied to itself."

So much for men's attitude of mind in regard to themselves; so much for their relations to their fellows. If from these we turn to the consideration of men's dealings with God, again we see the evil triumphs of duplicity. So few are thoroughly honest

with God; so many are deplorably double-minded and double-handed in their conduct towards their Maker!

Doesn't it often happen, that, perhaps almost unconsciously, we reserve some hidden corner of our souls as an uncharted domain where neither we nor God may enter? Doesn't it sometimes come to pass, that we make compromises with God, and think that we are doing a great deal for Him, whilst at the same time we close our eyes to the real necessity, which calls for an unrestricted surrender to Him? Doesn't it sometimes occur, that we endeavor to make of the affair of salvation a business proposition, not unmarred by equivocation and subterfuge and "trading"?

All this, no doubt, is not flattering to our self-appreciation; but isn't it too sadly true? We may know that unflinching straightforwardness requires us to lay the axe to the root of uncharitableness or gossiping detraction or slander—and we make the resolution in God's sight to be very careful in our prayers and very faithful in the fulfillment of our religious obligations. This last is good; but we are dodging the issue.

Again, we may know that we are failing through a false sense of freedom in speech or action, that we are tarnishing, if not destroying, the lustre of pure cleanness of mind and tongue—and we offer to God the determination to come to the assistance of the needy poor and to soften the hard lot of the poverty-stricken. Once more, a blessed resolve; but we refuse to face the basic reality. And so it goes on.

This condition of soul is fraught with fearful danger; for it lulls into a false security and deceives with the unfounded assurance of standing well with God. It is only less perilous than is the state of those, who, blinking the truth that the account with God may be called for at any moment, put off their return to Him until such time as their sweet good-pleasure shall determine upon.

This is self-blinding and a species of double-dealing with God. May no man put off his return to God, because he tells himself that he has no time, or because such a return means the severing of the loved, though loathsome, bonds of evil habit! If he does, he may come upon a day, when he

will curse the greed that kept him from his Maker and the pride that lifted him up to crush him by his fall and the lust which forged for itself chains which eternity itself cannot wear away; when grace will pass him by, not because God will not speak to him, but because he has so accustomed himself to close his ears to the voice of God, that he will not hear his Father's gentle whisper of love, and will be roused to endless remorse by the thunderbolt of divine anger.

This same fate may come to us too, if we indulge in another form of duplicity towards God, which wrecks the lives of many in this world—if we do not avoid the occasions of sinful evil. To place ourselves in the way of sin, to court its occasions, to dally along the paths where bitter experience has shown us, or should have shown us, that the death of the soul lurks, and then, in the midst of a whirlwind of temptation which we ourselves have raised, to send up a half-hearted cry to God for help, is worse than folly. To tell our offended Lord and Master that we are sorry for our transgressions—and not to make up our minds, honestly and bravely, to keep away from the persons or

places or things that have been the reason of our fall, is to mock Him and to try to make a fool of Him, as we have already made fools of ourselves.

If one knows that, as often as he has been with certain persons, he has fallen into sin; and then, whilst saying that he does not intend to sin again, seeks out the company of those who have been very devils in his regard—what is this but to act a living lie? If we wince and writhe and repine and openly rebel against God's loving care in guarding us, through the Church's ministration, from the poison of infidelity or immorality; if, whilst we plume ourselves on our ability to meet the onsets of the enemies of religion and purity, we close our eyes to the danger, or perhaps the already accomplished fatality, of the loss of our faith or of cleanness of mind and body—what is it all but self-deception which courts disaster and duplicity that runs to mockery of God? Again, though amusements are good and must have their place in the scheme of every life, if we know, that as often as we have indulged in certain forms of amusement or have gone to certain places of amusement,

we have come away with our souls befouled with the mire of sin, we can no more sanely repeat the experiment, than we can thrust our hands into the hissing flames of a raging fire and say that we do not wish to be burned.

To attempt to trifle with God is folly; and all this is trifling with Him. To try to make of the reception of God's sacraments a sort of "white-wash" proposition is but half-disguised sacrilege; and many of those who thus deceive themselves by flirting with the occasions of sin are making this attempt. To play the half-hypocrite in the sight of God, who reads the secrets of the heart and is not mocked with impunity, is tragedy itself; and the self-cozened dishonest ones are playing the tragedy of which they will be the victims.

Oh, for the singleness of vision and simplicity of purpose of the abandoned Christ as He stood before the Sanhedrim! Oh, for His straightforwardness in face of tortuous duplicity! Oh, for His strength as He gazed undaunted at His doom! Oh, that the realization of what even our remote participation in the spirit of the Sanhedrists

and their servants has done against us and against our God would nerve us to better and nobler efforts!

Let the bitter memory of the wretched past be a clarion call to higher things: let the thought of the evil that we have done help us to abstain from transgression in the future. God knows, we have done harm enough already. God knows, we have been ungrateful enough already. God knows, we have stretched even infinite mercy to the breaking point already. For, our lack of honesty with God and our half-conscious self-deception ranged us by the side of the Sanhedrists, who mocked sincerity and justice; just as our defections from duty made us play the part of the savage servants, who tortured the condemned Christ during the long hours of that night of black deceit, when He was waiting in the chains of durance vile—waiting for the morning to come that Rome might put the seal of her sentence upon His doom.

Yes, enough of making common cause with the forces of evil unto our everlasting loss! Enough of duplicity in its many forms! But to stand by the side of Christ,

looking straight up to God, facing right onward in the way of duty, though the path lead on to Calvary itself—this is a glory worthy of a true man or woman, worthy of a child of God, worthy of a brother or sister of the God-Man, who is majestic in His splendid sincerity and magnificent in His unswerving candor.

CHAPTER III

PILATE AND TIME-SERVING

"For he knew that for envy they had delivered him." Matt. XXVII, 18.

"Whom will you that I release to you: Barabbas or Jesus that is called Christ?" Matt. XXVII, 17.

"I . . . find no cause in this man. . . . I will chastise him *therefore* and release him." Luke XXIII, 16.

"But they were instant with loud voices requiring that he might be crucified: and their voices prevailed." Luke XXIII, 23.

"If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend: for whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar." John XIX, 12.

"And so Pilate being willing to satisfy the people . . . delivered up Jesus, when he had scourged him to be crucified." Mark XV, 15.

During the sad progress of the Passion of Christ disloyalty was rampant in its evil might against Him. Down through the ages it has been active against what is good and godlike: it is unceasing in its machinations today, as it will be unto the end.

Duplicity too stained the honor of humanity, as it schemed against the Savior during those hours of the triumph of the powers of darkness: it has poisoned the springs of noble endeavor, as the years have been marked off on the calendar of time: it twists the strivings of humankind in our own day; and it will try to do so until the day of wrath. These forces of evil, playing their unhallowed rôles in the Undying Tragedy of the World, we have looked at, that we may hate and avoid them: in appreciative wonderment we have gazed upon the suffering Master's magnificent example of loyalty and straightforwardness, that we may love and imitate Him.

But there is still another force for evil which binds many a slave with the chains of degradation and drags many a victim down to his undoing. It is the spirit of time-serving. This is the spirit of those who look only to the main chance of temporal advantage; who will do right, so long as no sacrifice is entailed; who are so wrapped up with the littleness of self that even patriotism becomes egotism; who will abandon everything and everyone—friends, family, repu-

tation, justice, and right—that their own personal ends may be subserved.

Often this time-serving goes hand in hand with hypocrisy and duplicity, and tries to cloak its vileness under a fair exterior. But sometimes it disdains even this mask of decency, and brazenly follows the lead of concentrated selfishness. It will cling to duty—unless this is too hard. It will stand for right—unless this brings the sting of pain. It will place itself on the side of uprightness—unless this costs something or demands the foregoing of some selfish advantage.

Against this veritable bane of honest and brave striving towards noble achievement our Blessed Lord gave His example of utter unselfishness, and over and over again preached His doctrine of complete self-forgetfulness. When He was but a boy He left Mary and Joseph without a word, and stayed in the temple whilst His parents sought Him sorrowing. And when they had found Him and had lovingly remonstrated with Him upon what He had done, He spoke those words which give the keynote to the conduct of His entire mortal life:

"Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" [1] To do His Father's will, to be about His Father's business—that was His life during the retirement of Nazareth; it was His life during the years of the public ministry, when He preached "the Kingdom of God" and prepared the means for the continuance of His mission of love; it was His life during the pain-crowded hours of His awful Passion. Nothing could be farther from the great soul of the Master than the mean, selfish seeking of individual temporal profit. The spirit of time-serving He spurned and crushed beneath the heroism of His absolute devotedness to the interests of God and man.

And the type of the spirit of time-serving—where shall we find it in the record of the sufferings of the God-Man? In Pontius Pilate. As Judas embodies disloyalty; as the Sanhedrim symbolizes duplicity; so Pilate personifies time-serving; and his conflict with the Jews is the foreshadowing of the losing fight against unrighteousness by fickle, faithless conscience.

[1] Luke II, 49.

What sort of a man was this Pontius Pilate? Was he a coward? Not so; though in the handling of the trial of Jesus Christ he was an arrant coward. Haughty he was, and not a man to balk at ordinary difficulties, when his own personal advantage demanded strength of purpose or action. He had not managed the Jews with any delicate consideration; he had not feared them; and the streets of Jerusalem had run red with human blood, when with uncompromising decision he had crushed their opposition to himself. Was he lacking in experience of men or things? Not at all. He was a plain, blunt man, honest in the main, strong as a rule, brave, impetuous and headlong. He was a soldier, and sprung from a race of soldiers. But he was a politician, in the depraved meaning of the word; he was a time-server, who for fear of Cæsar and to please the people was ready to forget honor and right and justice. A time-server face to face in conflict with the fanatical, crafty members of the Sanhedrim and with the infuriated populace! These were the antagonists in the fight of which Jesus Christ was the object and the

prize. And the contest which figured forth the battle that is ever renewed as the ages go by? Let us witness it.

The condemnation against Christ had been spoken by the supreme council of the Jews. The remaining hours of the night had passed with the jailers of the Master venting their scorn for Him in vile and brutal sport. Morning dawned; and the members of the Sanhedrim held another hurried council, either in the hall of Caiaphas' palace on Mount Sion or within the precincts of the temple on the heights of Mount Moriah. They ratified the sentence of the preceding night; they arranged details for the furtherance of their murderous scheme.

For, all was not yet safe. There to the northeast of the temple rose the frowning massiveness of the citadel erected by the first Herod. The Antonia it was called—the fortress-palace which the Roman governor occupied at times of greater solemnities, that he might keep watchful guard over a conquered, but untrusted people. It was, in fact, more of a menace than a protection; and the flash of the morning light from the

spears of the Roman legionaries, sentinels over a subject race, brought home to the hating hearts of the Jewish priests the bitter thought that the power of life and death had passed from the judges of Israel. "The sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda . . . till he come that is to be sent":[1] so ran the prophecy. That sceptre had passed forever: He that was to be sent had "come unto his own and his own received him not."[2] And in the shadow of the tower of Antony that spoke of Him they were recalled to the realization of the humiliating fact that Rome must seal His doom. Pilate must be forced to ratify their sentence. Though truth would not prevail, craft must have its way; and then the Roman gibbet of the cross for Him who said: "I am the Christ, the Son of the living God"![3] On, then, to Pilate!

"Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the governor's hall . . . and they went not into the hall that they might not be defiled."[4] The soldiers of Rome must have

[1] Genesis XLIX, 10.
[2] John I, 11.
[3] Cf. Matt. XXVI, 64.
[4] John XVIII, 28.

observed the excitement and must have given notice, so that Pilate was not unprepared for the appearance of the priest-headed mob, as they brought their prisoner to the fortress. And Pilate went out to them.

As he walked along the marble corridors of his palace with his eyes resting upon the immovable ranks of the guards and upon the flashing uniforms of centurions and tribunes, his face must have brightened with the consciousness of power and his heart must have beat high with the thrilling thought that he was a Roman—nay, that here he was Rome. Yes, he was master here; and his eyes would have flashed with indignant fire, had anyone dared to tell him that he would play the craven's part. Proud and cold was the glance with which he swept the restless throng, until his gaze was held by the sight of the Man bound with chains, but calm and dignified and breathing forth an air of sorrowful majesty. Did those chains speak a silent threat to him, the judge?

"What accusation bring you against this

man?"[1] were the sharp words with which he greeted them. Accusation! They had not come to accuse. They had come for the ratification of the sentence which they had already passed. Accusation? They had no charge which would bear the scrutiny of Rome: their own charge of blasphemy would be passed by in silent contempt. So, with a superciliousness and a boldness and an air of injured innocence, that evil knows so well how to assume, they said: "If he were not a malefactor we would not have delivered him up to thee."[2] Quick as thought and sharp as a sword came Pilate's sneering answer: "Take him you and judge him according to your law": [3] "if you will make no accusation, I will conduct no trial. Rome will not be the blind dupe in the perpetration of crime." There was firmness! If Pilate had held to that course, he would never have been guilty of the blood of the God-Man. For, guilty he was. Judas was guilty; the Sanhedrim was guilty; but so too was Pontius Pilate: and the crime is laid at his

[1] John XVIII, 29.
[2] John XVIII, 30.
[3] John XVIII, 31.

door by the undying declaration of the Church's children through the passing centuries, as they say in the words of the Creed, "He suffered under Pontius Pilate."

Stung to madness by Pilate's insistence upon an accusation and whipped on by their fear of losing their victim, yet clinging to their crafty deceit, the Jews charged Christ with three crimes—and as they made the charges they lied, and they knew that they lied. "We have found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that he is Christ the King."[1] He perverteth the nation? A lie! His entire life had been one of beneficence to the people: His doctrine was holy and uplifting. The scribes and Pharisees, the Sadducees and Herodians had tried to lay hold of some word or deed of His to turn against Him, and had desisted in the forced acknowledgment of defeat. He forbiddeth to give tribute to Cæsar? A lie! They knew that, in order to entrap Him, they had asked, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar?" and He had said, "Render to Cæsar the things that are

[1] Luke XXIII, 2.

Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."[1]

At these two charges Pilate must have smiled in contempt. He knew what was going on in his province. He knew who were causing disturbance. He knew who were ill-affected to the sway of Rome. And to assert that here was a man, who, unknown to the Procurator, was sowing the seeds of rebellion, was to offer an insult to the thoroughness of that officer's administration.

Their third charge, however, was a masterpiece of their double-dealing craftiness: "He says that he is Christ the King." Christ did claim to be the Messiah, the King of Israel; and though Pilate would not listen to the charge of blasphemy, under which they had condemned Christ, he must heed an accusation of a claim to kingship. Yet, in the sense in which they made the charge, it was another lie. Why, when they would have taken Him by force and made Him king, He had fled away into the mountain alone.[2] But they were right in

[1] Matt. XXII, 17–21.
[2] Cf. John VI, 15.

thinking that Pilate must notice this accusation. He would not discuss the matter with them; but the prisoner he would interrogate. "Pilate therefore went into the hall and called Jesus."[1] Into that hall Christ went—and the judge and the prisoner stood face to face alone!

That scene was like an anticipation of the judgment at the end of time. The accused and the judge seemed to have changed places. For, as Pilate looked into the face of the Christ, as he felt the calm, deep gaze of the prisoner bore its way into his very soul, a feeling of awe came over him; the figures of his guards seemed to vanish; the trappings of his all but royal pomp seemed to fall away; and he stood in the nakedness of his soul before a mightier spirit. The great one of this world seemed *so* small in the presence of that pale, majestic Man who stood before him and gazed into his heart's depths.

"Art thou the King of the Jews?" said Pilate. "Sayest thou this of thyself, or have others told it thee of me?" replied the Master. "Am I a Jew?" curtly the Gov-

[1] John XVIII, 33.

ernor spoke; "What hast thou done?" A King? Yes, Christ was a king; but His kingdom was not of this world. "My kingdom is not of this world." "Art thou a king then?" "Thou sayest it. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world that I might give testimony to the truth." The king of truth, of holiness, of love! "A king of truth?" mused Pilate: "What is truth?"[1] Though he did not wait for the answer, he made up his mind that he must save this Man of men. And, as he went out to the Jews, a silence fell upon the boisterous throng; and Pilate said in a clear, cold voice: "I find no cause in him."[2]

Did he release the prisoner? That was the next step to take after the declaration of His innocence. Release Him! Ah! the time-server was beginning the series of compromises that would bring him to disaster.

The crowd heard in silence the words of the Procurator. Then, after a moment of stupefied wonder, their angry hatred broke

[1] John XVIII, 33–38.
[2] John XVIII, 38.

forth in fresh cries and complaints and half-veiled threats. "He stirreth up the people teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place."[1]

Now, time-server! Galilee? Here at last was light in the darkness: here was an easy way for Pilate to shift all responsibility from himself in this matter. Galilee! That was the portion of the country where Rome allowed Herod to play the king. Pilate would send Christ to Herod; and, whilst freeing himself from the necessity of an unpopular verdict in favor of the accused, or from the crime of participating in the perversion of justice against Him, he would appeal to the vanity of the Idumean by this mark of honor. So, "he sent him away to Herod, who was also himself at Jerusalem in those days."[2] And Pilate watched with relief the departure of the cortège, as it started out on its way to Herod's palace, and he returned to his own quarters with a sigh of gratification.

But the Governor's peace was short-lived. After mocking the prisoner, Herod sent

[1] Luke XXIII, 5.
[2] Luke XXIII, 7.

Him back to Pilate. The latter, notified by his soldiers of the return of the mob that clamored at his gates, went out again to them and to the judgment which he was forced to face. Why did he hesitate? Why, with the might of Rome at his back, did he not dare to do justice in the case of one unjustly accused? Why did not his honest vision of right, as he had looked upon the nameless majesty of the prisoner, nerve him to act up to the conviction which had been forced into his very soul? The answer is—time-serving.

Pilate greeted the priests and people with the words: "I find no cause in this man. . . . No, nor Herod neither. For I sent you to him, and behold nothing worthy of death is done to him."[1] Once more, a bold statement of the truth; but then the vacillation of the time-server again came to the front, as he temporized with an angry and insistent foe. "But you have a custom that I should release one unto you at the pasch":[2] "Whom will you that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus that is called Christ?"[3]

[1] Luke XXIII, 14, 15.
[2] John XVIII, 39.
[3] Matt. XXVII, 17.

Now, Barabbas was a robber and a murderer.[1]

That was Pilate's game—by limiting their choice, to force them to choose Christ for freedom. The spirit of time-serving was leading him where it always leads its victims, to compromises, which in turn pave the way for complete dereliction of duty. He was losing ground before the violence of the priests and people, whilst they were gaining more strength and more confident power as the conflict proceeded. The night before, the Sanhedrists had been practically alone against the Christ; they were so no longer. Before it had been only the priests; now it was priests and people. Before, the mob had been respectful, if not actually subservient and cringing; now they were haughty and defiant. A strong, decisive course of action on Pilate's part would have crushed their uprising at the outset; his legionaries would have scattered the rioters, as the wind scatters the chaff: now that Pilate had temporized, he could no more stop the stream of their hate-swollen wrath than a barrier of straw could stem the

[1] Cf. John XVIII, 40; Mark XV, 7.

mountain torrent. Crush evil at the beginning or it will crush you! That is the lesson which Pilate's time-serving policy teaches all of us. God grant that we may learn the lesson and never forget it!

"Whom will you that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus that is called Christ?"[1] Which would they choose? The innocent or the guilty? The upright or the reprobate? the great Son of God and the humble Son of man or the condemned outlaw and sentenced murderer? There was no room for choice; and Pilate meant it so. Yet, at the instigation of the false-hearted leaders, the whole people cried out: "Release unto us Barabbas! Away with this man![2] Crucify Him!"[3] Crucify Him! Three times Pilate spoke to them, desiring to release Christ; three times he urged that he found no cause in Him: but their victorious hate would not reason, and it hurled at him the shrieking demand, "Let him be crucified!"[4] The time-server had been forced

[1] Matt. XXVII, 17.
[2] Luke XXIII, 18.
[3] Luke XXIII, 21.
[4] Matt. XXVII, 22, 23.

back another step; he had lost another fight in the contest unto death.

This sad scene has been reenacted many a time as the years have gone by. Over and over again Christ has "come unto his own and his own received him not." Over and over again the same struggle has been fought in the human heart. In the souls of men conscience,[1] like another Pilate, has sat upon the throne, the representative, not of the highest earthly power, but of the great God Himself. Before that throne the surging mob of evil passions has gathered in a fury as unchecked as that of the Jews. Fickle conscience has asked them which they would have, Barabbas or Christ—a vile pleasure, a sinful gain, a degrading honor or God's law and God's love. With insane insistence these passions have shrilled, "Not this man, but Barabbas! Away with this man! Crucify him!" and faithless conscience has given way before their wild at-

[1] Obviously "conscience" is used in its wider and more general sense, as in the expressions, "purity of conscience," "defilement of conscience." It thus refers not only to the intellect, with its practical dictate about right and wrong, but also, and especially, to the will, with its power of choosing or rejecting good and evil.

tack. But had that same beaten, defiled conscience shown strength and decision in the beginning of the struggle, those passions would not have gained the impetuous force that was all but resistless; had it at the outset crushed those passions with a firm, unmerciful hand, the story of the repetition of Christ's rejection would not have had to be recorded in the annals of God's book of judgment.

After the failure of his artifice for Christ's liberation Pilate called for water, and going up to the judgment-seat he washed his hands in the sight of all, saying: "I am innocent of the blood of this just man. Look you to it." [1] Water might wash his hands; self-deception might soothe his heart into the counterfeit peace of having honestly done his duty: but water could not cleanse the guilt of blood from his blackened soul, nor could the false peace forever keep the nightmare of crime from the depths of outraged sincerity. Pilate's time-serving had led him to the point where Christ, though innocent, was doomed. For, though not yet condemned, doomed He was, when

[1] Matt. XXVII, 24.

the hoarse shout rang through the arches of the palace hall: "His blood be upon us and upon our children." [1]

But stay! another expedient might yet win the day. "I find no cause of death in him: I will chastise him *therefore,* and let him go." [2] Here was another horror of injustice brought forth from the Governor's shifting policy. "I find no cause in him: therefore I will chastise him." It was another concession to the mob, a tempting morsel thrown before a maddened, bloodthirsty beast. Besides, Pilate would humiliate Christ by this most abasing punishment, thus (so he hoped) satisfying the scorn and hatred of the Jews; and at the same time he would reduce the Victim to such a state of forlorn misery that the people would be appeased and let Him go.

So, he gave Christ to the soldiers to be scourged. And they scourged Him and crowned Him with thorns; and then at Pilate's order they brought the bleeding and broken wreck of humanity before him. Tottering and fainting the tortured, out-

[1] Matt. XXVII, 25.
[2] Luke XXIII, 22.

raged Master came again before the Governor. Pilate was not the man to be easily disturbed by the sight of blood or wounds. He was a soldier, and time and time again he must have gazed upon the carnage of the battle-field: he had seen the games and the fights of the arena where men were butchered "to make a Roman holiday." But he could not gaze unmoved upon the mangled Christ. To the honor of his manhood he thought that no one could look upon this lacerated Man and ask for more revenge. Accordingly he advanced to the portico that gave out upon the sea of faces, and Christ stumbled on after him, supported by the soldiers. The outcries of the people ceased; for they saw that Pilate would speak with them. "Behold I bring him forth unto you, that you may know that I find no cause in him."[1] Then he stood aside, brought Christ to the front of the platform and pointed Him out to them with the words, "Behold the Man!"[2]

Yet, even as he spoke, their roar of hate broke forth like the deep-toned bellow of

[1] John XIX, 4.
[2] John XIX, 5.

the tempest: "Crucify him, crucify him!" [1] And Pilate saw what a fool he had been. He had sunk to the folly of attempting to conciliate fiends: he had stretched justice beyond the snapping point: he had lowered his manhood to plead with unreasoning obstinacy. And the result of his weakness and vacillation and time-serving—what was it? The mad cry, "Crucify him!" Stung to red-hot wrath, he said to them: "Take him you and crucify him; for I find no cause in him": [2] "do you who have the hate of devils and who declare that he is guilty take him and crucify him, if you have the power. But you have not the power; and you would force me, who have the power, to bow to your will and to violate justice by crucifying a man who is innocent: I find no cause in him." In anger, sharp and hot as the Governor's, they shrieked back: "We have a law, and according to the law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." [3]

The Son of God! The words came to

[1] John XIX, 6.
[2] *Id. ib.*
[3] *Id. ib.*, v. 7.

Pilate like "a bolt from the blue." The Son of God! "When Pilate therefore had heard this saying, he feared the more."[1] He had feared to condemn an innocent man: now he feared that he might be condemning one who was more than man. The Son of God? Pilate must ask the question which was trembling on his lips. So, from the tribune on which they stood he again led Jesus within the hall and said to Him: "Whence art thou?"[2] It was no longer "What hast thou done?" but "Whence art thou?" The Governor leaned forward, his heart throbbing with excitement, his eyes staring in the intensity of the gaze riveted upon the prisoner. "But Jesus gave him no answer."[3] Terror and irritation turned Pilate's anxiety into threats. "Speakest thou not to me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and I have power to release thee?"[4] But threats could not break the strong spirit of the Christ. He looked Pilate full in the face and said: "Thou shouldst have no power against me

[1] John XIX, v. 8.
[2] *Id. ib.*, v. 9.
[3] *Id. ib.*, v. 9.
[4] *Id. ib.*, v. 10.

unless it were given thee from above."[1] No; Christ did not flinch; He did not fall back before the might of Rome's representative. He gave Pilate clearly to understand, that, should he prove recreant to his duty, he would be answerable for his abuse of power to the God of all. And, shrinking from the consequences which would come upon him, Pilate finally made up his mind to release this prisoner who might be more than man.

With his secret written on his face he went out to the people. They read that secret ere his lips had uttered it, and they launched the last bolt of their hate and craft. People as well as priests thundered at him: "If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend. For whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar."[2]

That ended the struggle. Before the bewildered mind of Pilate rose the form of the master of Rome, the ambitious, pitiless Tiberius. Pilate could see these devilish Jews bending the servile knee before the august majesty of the Emperor and hissing into his ear the information that his trusted

[1] John XIX, v. 11.
[2] *Id. ib.*, v. 12.

governor of Judea allowed an upstart to play the king with impunity. He saw the frown on the Emperor's brow; he heard the sharp words that spoke of deposition and death for the faithless minister; and, as imagination hurried on upon fearful wings, he could feel the stroke of the sword—and after that, the darkness. No; not that! For fear of Cæsar and to please the people he would sacrifice the Christ. Pilate's personal interests must not be jeopardized for a Utopian ideal. The time-server had lost the fight: naught remained but the official pronouncement of sentence.

There is the story of time-serving: there is the abyss to which it led, and to which it leads. The tiger shout of the Jews, "Away with him! Crucify him!" was the cry of sin, demanding the death of Jesus; and ever since then that cry has rung down the centuries. Heaven help us! the clamor of our own evil deeds swelled the roar of hate against the Savior. In our lives and in the lives of others the spirit of time-serving has repeatedly brought about the triumph of wrong against the Christ.

As we see what it has directly caused or

indirectly led to, let us fortify our souls against its fell influence; let us keep ourselves, and others whom we can affect, free from its baneful blight. On all sides we find the spirit of time-serving, either rampant in unblushing shamelessness or concealed under fair-seeming forms.

The influence of this evil genius in the realm of politics need hardly be referred to. So often have men witnessed the desire of personal profit or of party gain triumph over public good or national interests; so often have they beheld welfare of country crowded out of the place of first consideration, that they have become almost callous and look for such things almost as a matter of course. If, in public life and in commercial relations, a man is big enough to put time-serving behind him, he is considered not only an honest man, but almost a hero. God be praised! in the struggle for liberty, which was so lately crowned with a victorious peace, there were many who measured up to the standards of honest greatness and looked at things in their true perspective. But, even then alas! there were not wanting those who thought so much of self and so

little of country and of God, that they could batten like vultures on the carnage of war and pile their treasure heaps high with profits, wrung from the need of the nation and the distress of mankind. With such, it was not only duplicity; it was self-centred time-serving.

But, without dwelling on this horrible perversion of decency and patriotism, we may profitably refer in passing to another phase of this same wretched spirit—I mean, the placing of the State on the throne of the Deity. Pilate did that. The Master's motto was: "Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." But Pilate, in his love of self, would give unto Cæsar even the things that belonged to God.

And there are many Pilates today. How many so exalt the State that they make it the source of all rights and the fountain-head of all justice! Property rights? They come from the State. Marriage? It is a civic institution and subject to the complete control of civic authority. Life itself? Not only the forfeited life of the criminal homicide and the traitor, but the

life of little innocents, who may be unable to advance the community's material interests, and the life of the helpless and useless aged or of incurable sufferers—all these are considered to be within the province of State authority, to be snuffed out by murder, masked under the fair-sounding term of "euthanasia." Such things may appear profitable, if one looks through the short-sighted glasses of temporal prosperity; and the material advantages may be a motive for the time-server. But the same standard would justify Pilate's perversion of justice; for he too, whilst giving to Cæsar the things that were God's, derived temporal and material advantage from the murder of the God-Man.

We do owe much to the State—call it our country, if you will. We owe it obedience to its just laws. We owe it loyalty in its demands upon our service, whether in labor or money or life itself. Yes, we owe it the deepest and sincerest patriotism. And we owe all this, because we must give to God the things that are His. It is God's right that we give all this to our loved land.

How well Catholics have measured up to

these calls upon their patriotism is recorded on the pages of unbiased history from the birth of the republic to the present time. During the days of the revolutionary struggle, our first war, Catholics deserved the praise which was given them by the Father of his Country. And in the war just ended, whilst we numbered hardly one-fifth of the population of the country, nearly one-half of America's fighting men on land and sea were Catholics; nearly one-half of the little white crosses over the graves beyond the ocean keep guard over the mortal, and maybe mangled, remains of the sons of Mother Church.

Without a doubt, we know what we owe our country—and thank God! we give it. But we also know what we do not owe to any State; and in very love for our land let us see to it, that we do not render such things as would cripple us and ruin it. We do not owe subservience to ruthless violation of rights guaranteed by the Constitution. We do not owe servile subjection to measures which, without warrant, try to curb the inalienable liberty of free-born men. We do not owe supine acquiescence to the effort

to foist upon an unthinking multitude an autocracy of education, which, to the gradual extinction of liberty and justice, would arrogate to itself the iron-clad regulation of all education according to the whims of an endowed bureaucracy. To hug the phantom of security, when attempts are being made to outlaw the Catholic school-system, which has been built upon the foundation of abnegation and cemented with the tears and blood of sacrifice; to refuse to defend this bulwark of Catholic life; nay, to lift the eyebrow of scornful condemnation towards those who are alive to the real needs of the day, and to class them with disturbers of the calm peace of ignoble inactivity—what is it all, but the cowardice of the time-server and the weakness of another Pilate?

And in this connection, a merited tribute of condemnation may well be paid to another class of educational time-servers. There are those who expose the growing youth of the country (not merely the infants, but those in secondary and higher courses) to the danger of the poisonous atmosphere of irreligious or infidel Colleges and Universities, in the smug assurance that all will be

well and that their sons and daughters will profit by the social advantages which they will find as they rub elbows with the scions of millionaires and potentates. The fallacy of their hopes need not detain us; the pricking of the empty bubble of sordid ambitions need not distress us. But, even if the hopes were realized by the grasping of social emoluments not otherwise to be obtained; even if the vaulting schemes were crowned with golden fruition—what of the cost? Indifference with regard to the faith, if not its entire extinction; loss of the stainless delicacy of untainted virtue; the lowering of the standards for the conduct of life—what of these? If these resulted but once in a thousand times, who but the veriest fool or the most hardened time-server would dare to take the risk, if he visioned the Passion of Jesus Christ? And if the proportion of utter ruin and complete failure is so high as to stagger the thoughtful-minded (and it is), how will they dare to face an angry Judge and render an account of the souls of those whom they themselves, with a smile on their lips, have sent to their death?

Without doubt, it is a sorry subject, this

following out of the ravages of the spirit of time-serving; but at least it may put us on our guard and arouse us to stand fast for God and good. If we trace this same spirit of time-serving in the more ordinary details of daily life and in the minutiæ of common happenings, again we see its devastating work in the effects of weak human respect.

For instance, the time for Mass may summon us to the temple of God to take part in the offering of the tremendous sacrifice of the Body and Blood of the Victim of the world upon the unbloody Calvary of the altar—and some friends drop in with an invitation to an outing. In such a case, have we ever through fear of appearing narrow-minded or unappreciative repressed any mention of where our duty called—and turned our backs on God? Had the summons of the church bell called us to a business engagement which would have brought us golden profit, we would have given no second thought to any claim of courtesy, but would promptly have told our friends that we could not go with them; but—it is only God who calls, and God does

ask such hard things! Again, have we ever on a Friday sat down to table with non-Catholic friends, who knew quite well that we were Catholics and knew just as well what our Church demanded of us? If then meat was served to us, have we said to ourselves, that we could not bear to embarrass our hosts—and have we therefore quietly spurned the command of God's Church, prescribing that we offer the little penance of abstinence in memory of Him who died for us? If the viands were poisoned and we knew it, we need not, of course, raise an outcry, especially if the poison were ignorantly or innocently put before us; but would we hesitate about leaving untouched what would mean death to us? But—it is only a command of the Church, and therefore only a command of God! Why, the mean weakness goes to the extent of countenancing, at least by obsequious following, styles of dress and forms of amusement which would be more in place in the gaiety of pagan unrestraint and heathen luxury, than in the lives of those whose standard is the cross and whose Savior is the Crucified: and it does it, not unfre-

quently, because not to do so would mean to be left behind in the procession of fashion and to be labeled as hopelessly out-of-date!

It is the selfish meanness, the arrogant self-centredness, the miserable shifting, the execrable time-serving of Pontius Pilate, that is thus lived again in human lives and brings to naught the splendid atonement of the Christ.

Is greatness of soul dead? Is the fire of heart which can flame up into burning heroism a thing forgotten or unknown? Shall we stand by the side of Jesus Christ? or by the side of the recreant Procurator of Rome? On one side or the other we must be; for the Master spoke the necessity long ago, when He said: "He that is not with me is against me."[1] Oh, to be by the side of the Blessed Lord, though His portion is pain and sorrow, rather than by the side of His foes, though their lot be earthly joy and comfort! "Better one day in thy courts above thousands. I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners."[2]

[1] Matt. XII, 30.
[2] Ps. LXXXIII, 11.

Yes, it is better far; for, even amidst the black clouds of injustice and meanness, the Christ is resplendent with the glory of true manhood, as He is sublime with the majesty of divinity. And as by His sanctifying grace we are sharers of His Godhead, so by the uplifting of His actual grace we can be brave enough to partake of the courage of His superb manhood and to forget little temporal emoluments, as we fulfill the demands of duty and hold fast to God's eternal interests.

After all, "no man can serve two masters. . . . You cannot serve God and Mammon."[1] Those are the words of Christ. And Paul was in full accord with this holy, though hard, doctrine, when he said: "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."[2] We cannot serve riches, and be the subjects of God: we cannot be the slaves of lust, and remain the children of our Father in heaven: we cannot cringe before the opinion of our fellow mortals, and hold our heads erect in the sight of the Most High: we cannot be led by the detest-

[1] Matt. VI, 24.
[2] Galat. I, 10.

able spirit of time-serving, which places our personal, material advantage ahead of the claims of duty and the rights of God, and still deserve a place by the Christ in His heroic resistance to evil.

God grant that our part may not be with Pontius Pilate, beaten and disgraced by the enemies of the Master, but with Jesus Christ our Lord, majestic in misfortune, glorious in trial, resplendent in adversity, triumphant in the depths of ignominy!

CHAPTER IV

HEROD AND LUST

"It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." Mark VI, 18.

"And Herod seeing Jesus was very glad; for . . . he hoped to see some sign wrought by him. And he questioned him in many words. But he answered him nothing." Luke XXIII, 8, 9.

"And Herod with his army set him at naught and mocked him, putting on him a white garment." Luke XXIII, 11.

In the light of the Passion of our Blessed Lord we are studying the forces of evil which are assailing the souls of men and drawing them away from goodness unto their destruction. Disloyalty, duplicity, time-serving—all these we have considered. They are terrible engines of destruction and they play their hateful part in the unending drama of the world, just as Judas and the Sanhedrim and Pilate contributed to the crushing of the God-Man.

But there is another fatal agency whose

track down the ages is marked with desolation and death. It is probably but too sadly true, that its slaves outnumber the victims of any other enemy of righteousness. The dungeons of eternal hell are filled with the broken dupes that it has "cast out into exterior darkness," where there are "weeping and gnashing of teeth";[1] and the pathways of this life are strewn with the wrecks that it has made. For, it has degraded the human nature of countless men and women and has dragged them down to a debasement below that of brute beasts. It has crushed manhood and defiled womanhood; it has crowded madhouses with gibbering fools; it has disrupted families: it has eaten into the vitals of nations and has left them decayed skeletons along the highway of history. And the name of this enemy of God and man is lust.

Sometimes it goes its way in secret, and for very shame hides its hideous face from the sight of men, as it casts down to unutterable depths those who were meant to be the sons and daughters of God—and even then it is deplorable and despicable. Some-

[1] Matt. XXV, 30.

times it flaunts itself in the light of day, adorned with sensuous splendor; sometimes it folds the robes of pride about its loathsome form, scoffs at virtuous conduct, tries to justify itself by dragging down to its own level the clean living children of God; nay, sometimes it goes so far as to glory in its own degradation—and then it is almost beyond the reach of God's mercy.

Truly, a terrible scourge; but, oh, so widespread! Some of the saints, like St. Jerome and St. Alphonsus Liguori, have said—and heart-breaking experience seems to bear out the truth of their words—that ninety-nine out of every hundred who are damned bring their doom upon themselves by their surrender to this monstrous curse. We have good reason, then, to study this enemy of all that is holy, as it makes its undying attacks upon mankind; we have solid cause to look at it in its aggression against Christ in His sorrowful Passion.

Christ stands for ineffable purity, just as He is the embodiment of all perfection. Even His bitterest foes did not dare to besmirch His fair name by the slightest slander in this matter. They called Him a

glutton and a wine-bibber;[1] they called Him a friend of publicans and sinners,[2] and hinted that He was a worthy comrade of those whom He loved; they called Him a charlatan possessed by the devil;[3] they called Him a seditious man,[4] a disturber of the peace,[5] a traitor;[6] they called Him a blasphemer against God.[7] But in the wildest fury of their hatred they never dreamed of assailing His spotless purity; for even their blinded souls could see that such an accusation would defeat itself by its glaring falseness.

Purity was the apple of His eye; and His special affection was always for the pure. Born of a Virgin Mother, Christ ever kept His tenderest love for the innocence of childhood, because it was pure, and for virgins, because they were most like His own beloved spotless Mother. He extolled the excellence of those who would give their whole hearts and the complete sacrifice of

1 Matt. XI, 19.
2 *Id. ib.*
3 Matt. XII, 24; John VIII, 48.
4 Luke XXIII, 2.
5 Luke XXIII, 5.
6 John XIX, 12.
7 Matt. XXVI, 65.

body and soul to God, as comparable with the sacredness of the angels. In His mortal life the splendor of purity was His; and through the endless ages of eternity, His closest associates are those who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth and sing a new canticle that none others can sing—for they are virgins.[1]

Over against this all-pure God-Man, as He walks the blood-stained way of His Passion, our eyes are turned to the symbol of lustful impurity—to Herod and his court. Years before, Herod, surnamed the Great, had passed away; but he left behind him an evil brood worthy of their sire. These were Archelaus and Herod Antipas and Philip. It was the second of these, Herod Antipas, who was the Herod of Christ's Passion. He had married the daughter of Aretas, king of the Nabathæans; but notwithstanding this marriage, when on a visit to Rome he had wantoned with his niece Herodias, who was wedded to his own half-brother Philip. So, he married her and took her back to Galilee. The cowed Sanhedrim feared to launch the excommunication, which he

[1] Cf. Apoc. XIV, 4.

would have greeted with a sneer; and Herod and Herodias flaunted their incestuous adultery in the eyes of men and held their heads high in pride.

But there was one who was not crushed by fear of them. John the Baptist dared to reproach Herod openly for his evil deeds and to declare: "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."[1] John's brave candor was the beginning of the end for him. Fascinated passion for the shameless Herodias, whose hatred for John was as sharp and venomous as the tooth of an asp, joined perhaps with the groundless fear that the Baptist would arouse the people against the ruler's wild ways, rushed Herod into laying hands on the Precursor of the Master; and the fortress of Machærus became the prison of him who was "more than a prophet,"[2] as it later became the scene of his sacrilegious murder. In very truth, Herod the Great, the monster who massacred the little innocents, had a fit successor in Herod Antipas, who murdered

[1] Mark VI, 18.
[2] Luke VII, 26.

John the Baptist, and who was the typical figure of lustful impurity.

It was before this Herod Antipas that Jesus Christ was dragged. In the earlier stages of Christ's trial before Pilate, the Procurator had declared, after serious examination of the prisoner, that he found no cause in the accused. The angry shouts of the people had protested against this decision. They shrieked: "He stirreth up the people . . . beginning from Galilee to this place." [1] Then and there, through a rift in the clouds of hate, Pilate glimpsed what looked like a ray of peace and hope. Galilee was in Herod's jurisdiction; and the Governor trustfully looked to diplomacy to spare him from an uncomfortable necessity, which bristled with difficulties on whatever side he approached it. So, to shift the responsibility to another in this thorny controversy, "he sent Jesus away to Herod, who was also himself at Jerusalem in those days." [2]

Away through the city the tumultuous

[1] Luke XXIII, 5.
[2] Luke XXIII, 7.

procession took its march, until it reached the palace where Herod was staying. Into the hall crowded the leaders and as many of the people as could force an entrance, dragging their weary prisoner.

The gorgeous splendor of Oriental luxury was there. Perhaps the severity of a court room was lacking, since Herod intended to seek his amusement much more than to hold a trial. The light of the sun and the thousand-fold glitter of artificial illumination flashed back from polished spear and shining breastplate of the soldiers and officers grouped about. The shimmer and sheen of silks and satins and heavy damask, the gleam of gold and the sparkle of jewels were all around. Reclining on a couch was Herod Antipas, and around him were gathered beauty and wit and power. The strains of sensuous barbaric music died away, as Herod turned his head to look at the stately Man who stood bound before him.

Was Herodias, "the detestable,"[1] there? and the siren Salome? It would have been a fitting climax, if they were, as they had

[1] So styled by St. Augustine.

been present on that other occasion when Herod's court was gathered in revelry to celebrate the birthday of the Idumean king.

On that day, within the hall in Machærus, mirth and jest ran high and minstrel songs echoed throughout the marble banquet-room. Loud laughter and soft whisper mingled in pleasure's quest; melting eyes and flushed faces gleamed beneath the twinkling candles. And amid the throbbing of drums and the blare of horns and the clashing of cymbals the dancing girl had woven her dance of death. During the drunken orgy, which the feast had become, Herod, again taken by his lustful senses, had sworn to the panting beauty that she should have whatever she asked, though it were the half of his kingdom. A moment of consultation with her tiger-hearted mother—and then: "I will that forthwith thou give me in a dish the head of John the Baptist." [1] A word of command: a short delay, filled with questioning apprehension and unnamed dread: and into the banquet-hall was brought a dish holding the bleeding head of Christ's Precursor—and the

[1] Mark VI, 25.

ghastly gift was presented to the damsel, who bore it to her mother.

Did this scene of blood come back to Herod on this day, as he reclined in soft sensuousness in his palace in Jerusalem? He had heard before of the marvelous works of Christ; and, as in undying memory his thoughts reverted to the murdered Baptist, he had imagined that Christ must be John come back to life. Was the vision of his crime before him now? Unless indeed lust had killed even remorse within him, as it can and does when it goes to the length of proud self-justification, perhaps back of the majestic form of the Christ may have loomed the figure of him who was but a voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way for a greater than himself.

Christ before Herod! It was a gorgeous sight, that hall with its adornment and its gathering; but it was not true splendor. It was a glorious spectacle of beauty; but it was not real. It was the glittering covering of filth. That palace court was the shrine of proud lust, and Herod the king was the wretched personification of self-satisfied impurity.

Christ before Herod! "Herod seeing Jesus was very glad; for he was desirous of a long time to see him, because he had heard many things of him, and hoped to see some sign wrought by him."[1] His desire was not founded upon reverence or longing for truth or yearning for enlightenment. He greeted Christ as he would have welcomed some performer, who might while away the tedium of a long hour; he received Jesus as if the Son of God had been a sensational wonder worker, who might amuse a sated, jaded, profligate court by some startling feat of magic or some marvel of jugglery. Was not this world given for the enjoyment of each fleeting moment? Was not the most serious occupation of humans to invent new ways of "having a good time" and cheating tedium of its victory?

Christ before Herod! The corrupted and corrupting spirit of the ruler and his court was like a stench in the nostrils to the all-pure Master. He looked beneath the smiling welcome of Herod's lust-marked face, back of the extravagant splendor of the profligate's sensuous companions and luxurious

[1] Luke XXIII, 8.

surroundings; and He read the horrible desolation of souls that were gladly feeding upon "the husks of swine." Christ was face to face with proud lust—and He *despised* it.

And He showed His scorn by His contemptuous silence; for, though Herod questioned Him in many words, "he answered him nothing."[1] Oh, that awful silence of the scornful Christ! The Master who had stood over the woman taken in adultery, who had read her sorrow as she crouched in heart-broken penitence at His feet, who had washed away her guilt and had spoken the words of comfort, "Go, and now sin no more";[2] the Master who had lifted up the fallen sinner of Magdala to the intimacy of companionship and the honor of a place beside His stainless Mother at the foot of His blood-drenched cross; the Master who had spoken to the crafty Annas and the hypocritical Caiaphas and the shifting Pilate—would not speak one word before the proud lust of that gathering in Herod's court. Oh, the blistering scorn,

[1] Luke XXIII, 9.
[2] John VIII, 11.

the withering contempt of Christ, as His silence told more piercingly than thundering words how much He despised it all! That is the worst punishment of a sinful soul, steeped in lust—that its conscience should be dead, aye, and buried in a defilement worse than the corruption of the grave.

Before the scorn of Christ's silent contempt Herod's heart was hot with furious anger; yet he and his soldiers and courtiers would not admit that they felt the sting of the Nazarene's reproach. So, whilst "the chief priests and scribes stood by earnestly accusing" Jesus, "Herod and his army set him at naught and mocked him."[1] This man a prophet? This man a criminal? Why, He had not nobility enough to be a prophet, nor sense enough to be a criminal. He was a fool! He was a simpleton, who had not wit enough to recognize the splendor that was there before His eyes, nor discretion enough to grasp the fulness of the honor conferred upon Him in being allowed to amuse the great ones of Galilee and Judea! So, they clothed the Son of God in the garb

[1] Luke XXIII, 10, 11.

of a fool, and with a mocking sneer turned away to entertainment more congenial: they "put a white garment upon him and sent him back to Pilate." [1]

How that mockery hurts! To be hated pains; to be persecuted stings: but sometimes the mockery which looks upon one as a fool bites deeper than all else into the heart of a man. All mortal sin does that, even to the Sovereign Lord! It mocks God and makes a fool of Christ. The lives of those who in the hurly-burly of their days have no time for God, who play fast and loose with God's mercy, who dare to prescribe to the Eternal the time and the circumstances and the conditions of their return to Him, mock God as Herod mocked the Christ. And in their heart of hearts such men can have no more peace than Herod had; and he had none. For, as that silent, awful Man was led away, the heart of Herod must have been gripped with the consciousness that the hand of the Almighty was upon him.

Whilst all sin mocks Christ, the sins of those who give themselves to unrestricted pleasure, even unto the vileness of impure

[1] Luke XXIII, 11.

excesses, are an especially hateful mockery of the Son of God. To look to a crucified Savior as the Redeemer from evil; to hearken to His words, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me"; [1] and then to place the be-all and end-all of life in the pursuit of sensual gratification, even unto the disregard of the solemn mandates of the law of nature itself—this surely is a monstrous mockery of Jesus Christ.

If the sensualists are right and if pleasure is the god before whom every child of man should worship, then indeed Christ was a fool; and fools too are His noblest followers; for, as St. Paul said, "If *in this life only* we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable." [2] If the course of man's existence were to be measured as is that of the brutes, and if during this short span man, like a starving wretch, ought to snatch with greedy hands each morsel of pleasure; then surely He who faced the awful depths of dishonor and suffering, which the Passion held, was king of fools and monarch of

[1] Luke IX, 23.
[2] I Cor. XV, 19.

madmen. But if He is God, and if His words and His judgments shall not pass away; then the reducing of man to the level of the beast, by the horrible preversion of the supreme handiwork of God, is an unspeakable mockery of the Savior.

Now, the dear Christ is the Wisdom of God and His judgment stands; and that judgment, pealing forth from His condemnation of the lust of Herod, is that the most delicate works of God amongst mortals are a pure woman and a clean man. The sanctifying grace of God with its marvelous effects is the most magnificent achievement of divine omnipotence and love in the human soul; and therefore, purity is not the greatest of the boons sent down from heaven to earth. Yet, whilst purity is not the highest gift of God, in its glorious strength it is at once the most delicate and the sweetest guerdon from the heavenly mansions of Paradise.

A pure woman, whether virgin maiden or chaste wife and mother, what a wonderful work of human heroism and divine giving! In the elevation of the Little Maid of Naz-

areth woman has been lifted up to an eminence which calls for the respect and veneration of men. She is sacred, whether as the consecrated handmaiden of God in religious life or as the queen of the fireside and the heart of the home. This purity is the crown of her womanhood; and if she lose it, it is so tragically piteous! There is a peculiarly fragrant delicacy in the purity of woman; and the attitude of the world towards one who has cast it away is not altogether the spirit of the Pharisee. It is the voice of nature and of nature's God, hating impurity in all, but loathing it in a woman. The very elevation of her dignity makes her fall the more disastrous, if it comes. May she guard that elevated dignity! May she work out her destiny! And it is a blessed destiny; for by her sacred sweetness she is meant in the designs of God to lift the world and to make it a holier, as well as a happier, place to live in.

Yet, for all that, a strong, pure, clean-living man is an object of deserved reverence, even for those who are not brave enough to follow his example in curbing the

longings of animal nature. And—let it be well noted—for the man there is identically the same standard of personal purity as for the woman, unspotted in her hallowed holiness. For, much as a pagan world may prate about liberty and unshackled freedom, there are not in the sight of God two different standards of purity for man and woman. The man may not with impunity break the law of God which demands clean living any more than may the tender virgin. The "sowing one's wild oats" is a sowing which but too often reaps the whirlwind here in this life and the undying hurricane of destruction in the eternity of God's anger.

All this is the verdict of Christ before Herod. Of a truth, Herod the lustful, who mocked the Christ, was the consummate fool: Christ the all-pure, whose contempt despised and condemned him, was the Lord of wisdom and of unalloyed truth.

In some later reflections we shall see what the direct expiation of the lust of the world cost our Blessed Savior; but, even without the thought of that, His scorn and hatred for impurity should nerve individual and family

and nation to preserve unspotted the sacred lily of purity.

As for our individual selves, we should always remember the sacredness and the dignity of a pure man or woman. God has endowed us with intelligence and will to know and embrace what is in accord with our human nature, as rational and as above the animal composite of the beast. Indulgence in passion always increases the fierce yearnings of unworthy instincts, and, in the same proportion, cripples our godlike power of self-determination. Besides, to give way to the cravings of lust is to allow the animal to make an abject slave of the man or woman. This is a disgrace to the nature that God has given us. And the degradation grows to positive horror, when we recall with St. Paul that we are the temples of the Holy Ghost,[1] whom we should reverence in our very flesh; that we are the members of Jesus Christ, whom we dishonor by our defections from the straight standard of purity. "Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them

[1] Cf. I Cor. III, 16.

the members of a harlot? God forbid!"[1] Yes, God forbid!

But we must be on our guard. We should know that here, if anywhere, the wisest courage is the bravery of flight. If all occasions of any sin are to be shunned as the approach of the fiend, in this matter of purity our vigilance must be redoubled; the more so, since there are unceasing allurements from without to throw fuel upon the white-hot embers that smoulder within us. We live in a world, where but too often purity is measured only by the canons of exterior respectability, and is not weighed in the balance of God's truth. We are walking along the brink of a precipice, where a foolhardy step may hurl us into abysmal depths. We are guarding a citadel, where there is a hidden traitor waiting to deliver us, bound hand and foot, into the power of the foe lurking without. With no looking for evil we find it. What if we seek it? Without our choice the danger is there. What if we love and court it? If we disregard the prudence of wise caution, the day will come when we shall feel the hot flames of passion

[1] I Cor. VI, 15.

leap and surge about us like fiery blasts from the open mouth of hell. And if that day comes, God help us, if we have not learned to value our purity more than our lives!

But unfortunately, caution is called squeamishness; regard for decency is sneered at as prudery; self-control is misnamed narrow-mindedness. In the eyes of a sensual world Herod was the paragon of broad-minded tolerance; Jesus Christ, the exemplar of inconsiderate self-repression! And so, "wisdom" (the false wisdom of a godless world) "is justified by her children."[1]

There is no getting away from the fact, that occasions we must avoid—or we shall perish. One of the most common occasions of personal impurity is excess in drink; and the man or woman who would safeguard the fair lily of purity must shield it from the hot breath of liquor-incited passion. Yet intemperance has spread like a devastating plague. Not only in disreputable dives and noisome saloons of the submerged portion of civilized peoples has the net of death been set, but in the dazzling

[1] Matt. XI, 19.

halls of fashion and refinement. Not only amongst men are intemperance's victims numbered, but amongst women too. And with women, it is not only the foolish girl, boisterously flinging away the delicacy of sweet maidenhood by her promiscuous meeting and unrestrained drinking with half-criminals in low dance-halls, who has found her way to the bottomless pit; her fastidiously nurtured sister has discovered, that, without the fiery stimulant of alcohol, she cannot sparkle in eye and tongue as her fancy urges her to do.

Yes, excess in drink is the gruesome sister of impurity; and the sad sight of blasted hopes and ruined modesty and desecrated purity is enough to wring the heart of any true lover of his kind. The present wave of prohibition reform by federal enactment, which, as being an unwarranted violation of individual liberty, many keen-visioned thinkers do not favor, though they unquestionably do favor temperance for all, and total abstinence for those who either need it for temperance in themselves or who are big-hearted enough to make this sacrifice as an encouragement for the stumbling weak-

ling—this, be it said, might almost be welcomed, if it gave promise of lessening the danger of excess in drink and if it thus diminished the peril of the loss of purity.

Another ambushed foe, ranged against purity, is the senseless following of a pagan fashion. Men will invent and women will adopt forms of dress which make a direct appeal to fleshly instincts. The depraved know this tendency: those who are still clean may follow, without realizing the natural effort of such indecencies. Many a pure woman shows herself in attire—or the lack of it—which almost inevitably arouses in those who have wallowed in the mire unworthy thoughts and unbecoming desires. Were such thoughts and desires spoken to her, she would blush for shame and cry out in angry indignation. Why, then, should she not cry shame to herself for being the occasion of such thoughts and desires?

The Apostle's words, "All things are clean to the clean,"[1] are pregnant with inspired truth; but the axiom, "To the pure all things are pure," as understood by sensualists, is only a half-truth, and in its

[1] Tit. I, 15.

name almost as many crimes have been committed as in the name of liberty. Keep the mind clean? Yes, please God! but, for that very reason, keep away from things which would defile the mind. This last remark bears especially on such kinds of reading and such forms of amusement, as connaturally give rise to thoughts which besmirch. Beware the asp! Unless one keeps the mind clean and the imagination undefiled, it will not be long before sensualism goes on even to bodily degradation.

The impurity which makes a revolting caricature of the "image and likeness of God,"[1] is truly worthy of the condemnation meted out to it by the silent Christ, as He stood before Herod. But, pernicious as is personal impurity, still more disastrous, if possible, is the lust which sinks its viper fangs into the heart of the family. This domestic impurity has left its slimy trail across the history of a lustful race; it is alive and active for evil today. The Sovereign Pontiff, Benedict XV, says: "Every effort is being made to weaken the firmness and indissolubility of the marriage

1 Genesis I, 26.

bonds and to prevent our youth from coming under religious influence. Wickedness goes so far as to endanger the very propagation of the human race, and with infamous vices, to defile the sanctity of matrimonial life by praising shameful practices for the gratification of lust which frustrate the rights of the laws of nature."[1] These words of the Vicar of that Christ who branded with infamy the lustful Herod, condemn the passion which would enjoy the privileges of the wedded state, whilst shirking its sacred obligations; they also unequivocally condemn the passion which has foisted upon the world the monstrous evil of divorce.

Divorce *is* a monstrous evil. By the law of nature marriage cannot be dissolved by the mutual consent of the contracting parties—or the relation between man and woman would be reduced to the unspeakable vileness of promiscuous cohabitation. By the same law of nature the breaking of the bond so as to leave the parties free to enter into new unions is above and beyond

[1] Letter of Benedict XV to Padre Matheo Crawley-Boevey, April 27, 1915.

the power of the civil authority—or nature itself, and nature's God, would have opened the door to the frightful abuses which stun all thoughtful and sincere lovers of mankind. Give but the smallest opening to passion, and the trickling stream will become the mighty torrent, will sweep away all barriers of restraint, and will rush along resistless and overwhelming.[1]

Our own loved land (God help us!) proves the tragic truth of this sad statement, just as it possesses the unholy distinction of having the highest proportional divorce rate in the whole wide world. Very recently the latest official Bulletin of the Census Bureau was made public.[2] Its revelations are simply appalling. In less than a quarter of a century, in twenty years, from 1896 to 1916, the number of divorces in proportion to the number of marriages was more than doubled! So far did the iniquitous juggling with the law of God proceed, that in 1916 there was one divorce for every nine marriages. And we call ourselves a God-fearing, religious-minded, Christian people!

1 Cf. *Cath. Encyc.* s. v. "Divorce," p. 68.
2 March, 1919.

The truth cannot be blinked. Divorce with subsequent remarriage is legalized impurity. Although there may be many causes which demand separation from an unworthy partner, in the majority of cases the plea for a union with another consort comes from the insatiate longing of the flesh. Passion may cloak its claim under the sanctimonious plea that "marriage without the love which should be its soul is a base hypocrisy and an earthly hell"; it may clamor about "the right to live one's life to the full," "the right to personal happiness in truth and sincerity of heart," "the right to escape from unbearable misery and to try again after a ghastly failure." These are but the fallacious sophisms of lust. For, even though love be dead, conscience need not perish; the right to happiness is not without the limits circumscribed by God and His all-holy law; the right to escape from misery does not include the adoption of unhallowed means.

Is polygamy wrong? It is to such an extent, that it cannot be allowed except by God alone—and by Him, because His providence could forestall pernicious conse-

quences, should His wisdom tolerate it. Then, the successive polygamy, which is the result of divorce, is not less against the law of nature. Nay, in a manner, it is worse than the simultaneous polygamy which the refined (!) abhor, in as much as the lot of the children in the latter case is much better than in the case of the legalized polygamy of divorce.

The law of nature and the original intention of God as to the union of man and wife were emphasized by our dear Lord, when He brought marriage back to its primitive unity and indissolubility. "Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another committeth adultery against her. And if the wife shall put away her husband and be married to another she committeth adultery": [1] "What therefore *God* hath joined together let no *man* put asunder." [2]

Nay, Christ elevated the natural matrimonial contract between Christians to the dignity of a sacrament which shadows forth His own one and indissoluble union with His Spouse the Church; and as a conse-

[1] Mark X, 11, 12.
[2] Matt. XIX, 6.

quence, during the life of the two parties, consummated Christian marriage can no more be dissolved for the beginning of another binding, than Christ's everlasting union with His Beloved Bride can be broken. As Christ and His Spouse are one unto the endless end, so a Christian man and his Christian wife are one until death do them part.

And if the law of nature and the positive divine law, which stand as ramparts against the encroachments of lustful excesses, bring pain and sorrow to some, what wonder? Law, which looks to the general good, often works hardship to the individual. But there was a deep truth in the words of the hypocrite Caiaphas, who said: "It is expedient . . . that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation perish not."[1] So too, it is right that some individuals should play the martyr's part, in order that the race of men may not wallow in the mire and go down to degradation.

Besides, in the face of difficulty the help of God is at hand for those who will have it. Prayer and the sacraments are the heaven-

[1] John XI, 50.

granted means for fortifying the weakness of nature, especially against the onsets of lust. In the Holy Eucharist "the corn of the elect and the wine springing forth virgins"[1] are ready for the Church's children to make them stronger than themselves. And for those who are deprived of this "holy of holies" there is the grace which comes through the channels reserved for such as, through no fault of their own, are not possessed of the fulness of God's sacramental assistance.

But, it may still be urged, in spite of these aids it is hard to abide by the law of the unity and indissolubility of marriage. Hard? Perhaps it is; nay, surely it is at times. But, look at the other side of the picture. If it is not this, it will be the moral degradation of man to the baseness of an instinct-driven brute: it will be the debasement of woman to the deplorable state which is hers when paganism, ancient or modern, has worked its will upon her—cast down from the heights of sacredness to the infamy of a toy of lust or a plaything of passion: it will be the crushing of the sweetness of

[1] Zach. IX, 17.

childhood to the wretchedness of abandonment or the misery of an orphanhood that is not sent from heaven, but is engendered by the archenemy of God and man.

Moreover, a polluted family means an endangered State; for the fireside of the home is the palladium of the nation. When the women of Rome counted the years, not by the consuls, but by the number of their husbands, the mistress of the world entered upon the way that led to the extinction of her greatness. God grant, that our own loved land may read the handwriting on the wall and safeguard her existence before it is too late! In the bottom of my heart I cherish the hope that she will; I cling to the assurance that she will awake before she sleeps in death. We should all hold fast to this confidence; but meanwhile, our very love for our country should urge us to do whatever we can to stop the ravages of divorce, which is a national plague-spot.

America owes more to the dear old Church than the thoughtless realize. It is the Church that has stood in the breach against the assaults of divorce, the devilish enemy of the nations, and has held in check the

fierceness of its advance. Her own children she has guarded from the infernal pest under threat of eternal damnation; and beyond her pale the influence of her battle for the purity of home and country has found its saving way. May our country come to see and acknowledge the immense debt which she owes to Mother Church!

I trust that this prayer will be answered. And, under the providence of God, which will (I pray) do great things for the world through America, my hope is based upon the gleam of brightness that shines across the blackness of the late world-war. Then our country made the splendid concerted governmental effort to keep her fighting men pure. Religion had always stood between the soldier and his unworthy instincts. But, in present-day indifference, it was a new thing for a nation to do its utmost to second the command of God and to further the longing of every true man and every pure woman of the land, that the boys might come back clean. Some of the men, it is true, did not heed the mandate of God, the desire of loved ones, or the effort of their country: some of them fed themselves

with "the husks of swine": some of them followed after the profligate Herod and feared not the silent contempt of the angry Christ. But many others were manly men. And all the while, before faithful and unfaithful, the ideal was there, seconded by America. And the ideal was for each of the boys to come back, to press his lips to his mother's lips, to clasp a sister to his manly breast, to hold wife or sweetheart in the embrace of love; and to know in his inmost soul that he was not less worthy, than he was when he marched away, of the tender affection and the throbbing love of that sweetest masterpiece of God, a good and pure woman.

Let us conclude. The fight against lust, either covert or proudly scornful, calls for the strength of heroes and heroines; for, the weakling goes under in the fight and grows in feebleness as well as in defilement. The godlike power of free self-determination must be made stronger day by day through the exercise of self-restraint even in lawful things, so that we may show to passion that we are masters in the domain of our own souls. Christian asceticism is

not the bugaboo of blinded superstition, as the fools of the world have called it; it is the natural means of making safe the glory of our human nature.

Moreover, besides thus strengthening our wills, we must fly from the occasions of evil as from death itself, and, in the spirit of Christian charity towards God and man, we must put the ban of our disapproval on every attempt to drag down the blessedness of virtue. Let no prurient literature prosper through our spread of it; let no questionable theatrical performance thrive on our patronage; let no fleshly fashion flourish by our adoption of it. And beyond all this, whilst keeping before our souls the ideal of unstained womanhood and clean manhood, let us draw near to God to clasp Him with the arms of loving prayer and to be linked to Him by the hallowed chains of the sacraments.

Yes, let our lives be pure in our individual selves, in family relations, in civic endeavors and national aspirations. May we stand with the Christ, His friends and companions, even though the cost be scorn; for, His beaming eyes will bless us with a love

whose value is beyond price! May we never have part with Herod, the incestuous adulterer, the proud profligate, the lustful libertine! May we never be stricken by the thunder of the scornful silence of the Christ in the presence of the fool who dared to make a fool of the Savior of mankind!

CHAPTER V

THE SOLDIERS AND CRUELTY

"Then therefore Pilate took Jesus and scourged him." John XIX, 1.

"Then the soldiers of the governor taking Jesus into the hall, gathered together unto him the whole band; and stripping him, they put a scarlet cloak about him, and platting a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand. And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying: Hail, king of the Jews. And spitting upon him, they took the reed, and struck his head." Matt. XXVII, 27-30.

"Jesus therefore came forth bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment. And he saith to them: Behold the Man." John XIX, 5.

One of the most eloquent speeches ever penned by Shakespeare, the wizard of the human soul, is placed on the lips of Mark Antony. As this zealous partisan of Cæsar was standing over the mortal remains of his murdered friend, he told his hearers, whom he was stirring up to the fever heat of revenge:

"I only speak right on;
I tell you that which you yourselves do know;

Show you sweet Cæsar's wounds, poor, poor dumb
mouths,
And bid them speak for me." [1]

Such too has been my part, though not for the purpose of stirring up revenge. It has been my portion to tell the bitterest story ever told; to rehearse the sad, sad scenes of Christ's sorrows; to show you the wounds of His Sacred Heart, and bid them speak for me and plead for the solace of atoning love to Him. We have looked upon the God-Man writhing in anguish beneath the foul weight of the sins of the world; we have followed Him before the hypocritical tribunal of the Jews and the time-serving judgment-seat of the representative of Rome; we have beheld the Wisdom of the Father mocked as a fool by the incestuous adulterer Herod.

The tortures of the agony in the garden, though reaching to our Lord's body, came from no pains inflicted by His enemies upon His sacred flesh; and, though the hatred of His foes degenerated into violence in the other scenes that have passed before us, the outrages were chiefly those that struck the

[1] *Julius Cæsar*, Act III, Scene II.

spirit of the Savior. Now, however, we have reached a point where the pains which afflicted Christ's tender flesh were not only those that flowed over from a desolate soul, not merely those that came from the rude and ruthless dragging from one tribunal to another, but were the direct onslaught of fiendish cruelty against His sacred body. We are to gaze on Christ in the hands of the savagely cruel soldiers.

With saddened hearts we have also viewed the undying attacks, which down through the ages the forces of evil have been making against God and against His Christ. We have studied the fell, disastrous effects in the lives of men of disloyalty and duplicity and time-serving and lust. But we have not reached the end of the catalogue of evil. There is another force of wickedness, typified by the soldiers in their relentless barbarity; and it is cruelty.

This cruelty often comes from lust. History proves this. Rome, which has stood not only as an example of human greatness, but as a shining beacon for the nations to warn them from the rocks of de-

struction—Rome proves it. When lust had broken down the sturdier virtue of earlier days; when it had torn asunder the home by the noisome prevalence of divorce; when it had enslaved the valor of Roman manhood to minister to sensuous luxury; then, and not till then, did her children cry out for the struggles of the arena and for the death fights of men, who bled to quench the tiger-thirst for blood in lust-hardened hearts.

Besides, cruelty may also come from pride, with its insane exaltation of self: it may come from avarice, with its insatiate longing for the material things of a perishing earth. In a word, it comes from that undisciplined, unrestrained humanity that sinks down to brutality.

Whatever its source, cruelty is a veritable beast of prey, hard, relentless, ruthless. What it has done to the world, we shall see presently; what it did to the suffering Jesus, let us behold as we look on the Christ in His scourging and His crowning with thorns at the hands of the brutal soldiers.

Were it not for the fact that I have under-

taken to place before you the various scenes of Christ's Passion and to study with you the deathless attacks of evil against God and good, I should much prefer to pass by the awful incidents of the Scourging and Crowning. For, as the poet says, there are "thoughts that too often lie too deep for tears";[1] and if they lie too deep for tears, they surely lie too deep for human words. These scenes were best realized in sad, silent meditation. Yet, in the hope that my words may at least bring you to this prayerful, sorrowful reflection, I shall put the incidents before you.

Earlier in our considerations we looked on Pilate as he ineffectually struggled to stem the flood of the Jews' hatred and malice against the Christ. We saw the Governor give way step by step before the relentless attack of Sanhedrists and people upon the Man whom he knew to be innocent and whom he had resolved to free from their power. His words spoken in the discomfiture of coming defeat suggested another way to compass his end. "I find no cause in this man in those things wherein you accuse

[1] Wordsworth, *Intimations of Immortality.*

him . . ." he had said: "I will chastise him therefore and release him." [1]

He would submit Christ to the ignominious torture of the scourging, and would, he hoped, satisfy the scorn and hate of the priests and people by this cruel humiliation and by reducing the Victim to so pitiable a state as to glut the fierce anger of the mob by the sight of the prisoner's frightful sufferings. St. Augustine [2] is our guarantee for thus reading the intentions of Pilate, and his explanation has found favor with the best commentators of the Sacred Text. It is well to bear this in mind—that Pilate wished this scourging to be so severe, that he might call on anyone who deemed himself a man to be content and to let the prisoner go. And if the sufferer should die under the torment? Well, Pilate must chance it: he must snatch at this last straw to save himself from the torrent that was bearing him away.

What was the torture of the scourging? This much is sure, it was one of the most frightful ordeals of suffering ever invented

[1] Luke XXIII, 14, 16.
[2] In Ps. 63 ad vers. 2.

by man. The whipping and lashing of a human being has always been looked upon, not only as a disgrace, but as a form of most intense pain; and it has gradually been dropped from the punishments of civilized nations, except, perhaps, in the case of those who are considered as little better than brutes. Where it is retained, we shudder at the bare recital of the minute details given as instructions. For instance, *The Manual for the Director of the Prisons* of one of the nations of modern times that prided itself upon its culture (*Kultur*) says: "Where the lash is applied the skin should burst at the fifth blow; the following blows enlarge the wound, and at the end of the punishment the whole back is open. Each blow should make a cut a half a centimetre long."[1]

Among the Cherokee Indians the lash was applied as a punishment; but the number of strokes was limited to one hundred—and this often meant death. The Russian knout (at least the old form) was a whole arsenal of instruments of torture. It could kill with one blow; but the painful ordeal could be so prolonged as to keep death at arm's

[1] Cited by Ollivier. *The Passion*, p. 282.

length. The knout was one long thong, which could wrap its hissing, biting length about the victim's body in such fierce embrace, that it seemed to be drinking savagely of his blood, whilst it tore the skin and cut to the very bone. Long years before, the punishment of scourging had been established among the Jews, but with a limit. Thirteen strokes on the right shoulder, thirteen strokes on the left shoulder, and thirteen strokes on the breast with the vicious four-thonged lash was the maximum allowed by custom; since it was necessary to keep within the limit prescribed by the law, which said that the number of stripes must "exceed not the number of forty, lest thy brother depart shamefully torn before thy eyes."[1]

But among the Romans scourging was still more terrible. Cicero harangues eloquently on its dreadful pain, when he paints the picture of Sestius beaten with the lictors' rods in the forum of Lilybæum, until he was left for dead on the blood-spattered ground. But, when the lictors' fasces gave place to the scourge of slaves, the suffering

[1] Deut. XXV, 3.

grew to such indescribable intensity, as to draw expressions of pity from those hard old Romans, who looked upon their slaves as mere chattels, less worthy of consideration than favorite hounds.

One form of the Roman scourge was made of cords armed with bits of bone, or of chains with buttons of metal at the ends of the lashes. Another form, the flagellum, was less formidable to the sight; but its long, sinuous, bare thongs—a multiplied Russian knout—made it worthy of the name given it by the poet Horace, who called it *horribile flagellum,* the horrible scourge.

These were the instruments of the Roman scourging. The number of stripes was not fixed by law. The agony of its infliction was so poignantly crazing that the imagination recoils in horror. And it was to the Roman scourging that Pilate condemned the God-Man, as he uttered the words of sentence, which a tradition has preserved: "Go . . . bind his hands; cover his head; and strike carefully and vigorously."

So, Christ was led to the corner of the Pretorium of the fortress-palace, the Antonia. His garments were torn from

His body, and He stood there in His nakedness, a jibe for the cursing on-lookers. There was a low marble column, about a foot and a half high, with a ring in the top. To this He was bound and forced to bend, that the scourge might bite with fiercer sting. A deep breath: a look to heaven: a movement of the lips that may have whispered an offering prayer to His Father: and He was ready for the frightful ordeal.

Pilate seems to have been absent from the scene of torture, though he may have remained until the infliction of punishment was begun. His absence gave the Jews additional opportunity to have messengers urge the strong-armed executioners to do bloody work. As some of the Fathers of the Church have said, the Jews in their cruel hate seemed to be possessed by the devil: and they may have feared that Pilate would prove intractable in the end and would free the prisoner, as he had said. Better that Christ should die under the lash than escape their fury.

In the midst of a silence full of dread foreboding, like the calm before the bursting of the tempest, the signal was given, and the

work of torture began. There was the hiss of the scourges as they swung through the air, the thud as they struck the flesh of Christ and clung there. Blow after blow rained down, insistent, merciless, endless. Quivering shudders passed over the frame of the Victim. There was a voiceless groan from the close-pressed lips, a tightening of the muscles, an unconscious straining at the cords that bound Him. And as the flail-like motion of the horrible scourges kept on unceasingly and savagely, large red welts arose on the white skin: they burst: blood flowed in streams, and pieces of the sacred flesh were torn away and jerked amidst the crowd around.

Poor, suffering Christ! Did the executioners strike, not only His back, but His breast and even His face? God knows! How long did the torment last? God knows! Were some of the saints right when they said that our dear Lord received thousands of stripes? God knows! But this we know: it was excruciatingly severe. Pilate's purpose shows that. The hatred of the soldiers of Rome, goaded on by the fiercer hatred of the Jews, shows that. The

number and the malice of the sins for which Christ was atoning shows that.

The Savior was atoning for sin—for all sin, but most of all for vile, fleshly sin. It is not without reason, that pious souls have always looked on the scourging as the Redeemer's special expiation of the sins of lust. For, the lash was prescribed in the Old Law as the penalty for some of the sins of the flesh;[1] and all lust is the placing in the ascendant of the animal in our nature—the animal which must be whipped into submission.

Before Herod we saw Christ despising lust; now we behold Him expiating it. And the vileness and the number of these sins of impurity, which have defiled the individual, the family, and society, show the frightfulness of the torture beneath which Jesus Christ groaned. No wonder, then, that the lashes swung on and on: no wonder that the blood flowed in ruddy rivulets: no wonder that the Son of God shuddered in voiceless agony: no wonder that His quivering, lacerated body crumpled down to the earth, helpless and bleeding, and hung by the

[1] Cf. Levit. XIX, 20.

cords that bound His wrists to the pillar.

There hung the Christ, weltering in the crimson tide that gushed from His torn veins, with the blows still flaying Him alive—until, as a tradition has it, a Roman officer, passing through the court, pushed his way to the side of the prostrate Victim and turned in anger to the crowd. "What! Would you kill a man who is not yet condemned?" he said, and cut the cords that bound our Savior.

There lay the Christ, cut, not with the knife, but with the swinging lash; burned, not with fire, but with the stinging flame of whips. There He lay, the sad sight which had come before the vision of Isaias when he mourned: "There is no beauty in him. . . . We have thought him as it were a leper and as one struck by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins and the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his bruises we are healed."[1]

What a sight He was! That soldier, whose heart was hardened to war, could not look on it unmoved. But the Lust of the

[1] Isaias LIII, 2, 4, 5.

World, with its unbounded barbarity, could do so. Then and ever since it has stood over Christ's flayed body, gloating over His sufferings in unfeeling savagery, glorying in His sorrows in fiendish cruelty. It has taunted Him, asking Him if this was all that He could do to end the reign of lust. Nay, it has snatched the bloody scourge from the hands of the wearied executioners and with a laugh that rang with the hate of hell it has again lashed the torn flesh of the Savior.

God knows, lust was cruel to Jesus Christ! And so too, it has been cruel to mankind. It has made man surrender the patent of his nobility and grovel in the defilement of degradation. It has crushed the soul down into depths of filth. It has darkened the intellect, so that the mind, that was made to rise even to the heights of God, has been debauched, until it has wallowed bespattered in thoughts that know not the radiance of God's light and purity. It has undermined the power of the will and has made the spirits of millions the abject slaves of depraved senses. It has besmirched the body, until in certain vile excesses the flesh

has entered prematurely upon the dissolution of the grave, corrupted and disgraced.

Oh, if only men and women would realize what lustful impurity has done to the tortured Savior and to themselves, then this world, instead of being, as it is for so many, the antechamber of hell, would become the vestibule of heaven itself, and would bloom with the fragrance of a purity that would rejoice the eyes of God and man. And they would realize it, if only in sorrow and love they stood over the mangled Savior, lying there in His blood; if, when the storm of temptation raged, they would fly to the wounds that have dug His sacred flesh, and would be strengthened by the crimson flood which throbs from His gashed veins. Then they would not barter away their everlasting inheritance for a mere nothing, and a less than nothing; they would not renew the devilish cruelty, exercised against the loving Christ in His frightful scourging.

Cruelty, like the tiger-thirst for blood, is insatiable. The cruelty of the soldiers, vented in the scourging, went wild and suggested another means to insult and torment the prisoner. They had heard that Christ

claimed to be the king of the Jews, and they may have thought that Pilate wished to crush Him for His pretensions. A king? Then must He be garbed in royal fashion and honored with regal court! Throwing His garments about Him, they dragged Him to the centre of the fortress, into the open space or atrium of the palace. There would be cheering entertainment and rousing sport afoot, and none of their comrades must miss it.

So, they called together the whole band. How many they were, we know not. They may or may not have been five hundred; but they were a large mob of ruffians, probably enlisted from the region of Samaria, and bearing for all the despised Jews (and how much more for this outcast!) the hate of Roman soldiers and of Samaritans, the double hatred of political and religious bitterness.

Yes, they would make Him a king! The soldiers of Herod had begun the mockery: the soldiers of Rome would show how an upstart king should be treated. First, they tore His clothes away from His body, which was one raw, untended wound. And then?

For the imperial purple, they cast an old military cloak about His bleeding shoulders. For His diadem, they took rushes from the horses' litter and wove them into a cap or mitre: and from the fagots for the camp-fire they tore long, sharp thorns, and thrust the piercing points through the woven cap of rushes. And the crown was ready. Down upon His head! and push it hard, until the thorns force and cut their way through skin and nerves and fasten it securely! Oh, it was rare sport, this crowning of the king!

Robed and crowned! But the sceptre was still lacking. A reed, like a piece of cane, would be the very thing. Thrust it into His hands; but first strike that thorny diadem, that the sceptre may make sure the crown!

It was all perfect. And the whole cohort gathered around, and laughed and cheered and jeered and hissed, each man egged on by the ribald applause of his comrades. There sat the King upon the broken column on which they had roughly thrust Him—the King holding His court. And they retired a short distance, and returning, advanced in

mock solemnity to pay Him homage. They came and bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying: "Hail, King of the Jews!"[1] And as they rose up, instead of offering the kiss of reverence whereby kings were saluted, they scoffed, and spat in His face. On came the ranks of those jostling courtiers, pushing and crowding, so as to force the King from His throne: and as He regained His position, they seized the reed from His hands and struck that thorny crown. Higher and higher rose the uproar; fiercer and fiercer grew the carousal of cruelty; and again and again above the clamor swelled the taunting cry, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

King of the Jews? Ah, let us in atoning love hail Him as our King: "Hail, King of the souls of men!" When we were baptized, we were clothed with the insignia of children of His Kingdom; when the chrism of confirmation anointed our brow, we were sealed with the mark of soldiers of the King. Have we been true to that King? Are we true to Him now? From our heart of hearts do we salute Him with the acclaim,

[1] Matt. XXVII, 26.

"Hail, King of love! Hail, King of the world"?

Let us be honest with Him and with ourselves: let us not be cruel with the brutality of unseeing pride. We are His. Are we brave enough to go on where He has led? Are we loyal enough to keep close to Him, as He fights and conquers by scorning reproach and by being stronger than pain? Can we follow Him, our King, not only when the sky is bright and the heavens smile, but when the storm-clouds gather and the tempest breaks above our heads and the din of war tests our inmost souls? And if we are not courageous enough to resist unto blood, shall we be so recreant as to play the part of traitors and to join in with the cruel onsets of selfishness and of pride?

Pride! The torment of the crowning and mocking is Christ's special atonement for the sins of pride. The cruelty of pride is appalling; yet the prevalence of pride is staggering. Isn't it the love of self unto the forgetfulness or hatred of God (and that, as St. Augustine said, is what pride is) to clasp the gifts that come from God and to have never a thought for the Giver of all

good? Isn't it insufferable arrogance to claim to be the children of our Father who is in heaven, and to dare to call Him before the bar of our puny reason and make Him justify His providence to our little, darkened minds—nay, to blaspheme Him because He chastises us in love? Isn't it unspeakable insolence for those who are the kinsmen of the Outcast of the world to allow misfortune to turn them into harsh critics of God, bitter haters of their fellow men, and abettors of doctrines which overthrow the home and the State?

Such things as these are as brutal in their proud mockery of Christ and as savagely cruel to Him, as were those soldiers of Pilate, who kept on with their diabolical sport until a messenger came from the Governor, commanding them to bring the prisoner before him.

Pilate, it has been noted, had not been present during the outrage of the crowning, as he probably was absent from the continuance of the scourging. Neither had the Jews been within the Governor's palace: they had remained outside the Pretorium, in order that they might not contract legal

defilement and thus be debarred from the celebration of the Pasch. They would stain their souls with the blood of an innocent victim; but they would not violate the Law by entering beneath a pagan roof. They would "strain out a gnat and swallow a camel."[1] From the windows and doorways some of them could catch an occasional glimpse of what was transpiring within, and more of them could hear the shouts and jeers with which the soldiers mocked "the King of the Jews." Whipped into fury by the priests who moved quickly among them, they knew no lessening of their panting desire for the death of the Christ. Like a storm-tossed sea off a rocky coast, the mob surged back and forth before the palace. But their restlessness increased. Perhaps they feared that Pilate would carry out his intention of liberating the prisoner. So, they shouted for their Victim.

Pilate was recalled to the conflict, and gave orders that Jesus should be brought before him. And Christ, the crimsoned, mangled toy of cruelty, was once more led into the presence of the Procurator, so

[1] Matt. XXIII, 24.

spent with pain and loss of blood, that He could scarcely totter along, and may have had to be supported by the guards, that He might stand before His faithless judge.

Pilate was a man of blood and iron; but he could not look upon the Christ without emotion. Was that wreck the majestic Man who had stood before him so short a time ago? Surely, he thought, and the thought does him credit—surely, no man could gaze upon that breathing wound, that living death, and demand more punishment. That crown of thorns and that mockery of royalty Pilate had neither meant nor commanded; but it would all serve his purpose. And he went out to the people.

With Christ stumbling on after him supported by the soldiers, Pilate advanced, and from the portico faced the frenzied throng. Then he pointed the Master out to the people with the words, "Behold the Man!"[1] Oh, what a sight He was! That head, crowned with thorns which pierced the skin and veins and sent the blood trickling down over the saddened face! That face, disfigured with spittle, and clotted with dust and gore, and

[1] John XIX, 5.

cut and swollen with the strokes of the scourge and the blows of the sceptre! That breast, furrowed with the lash; that body, torn by the whips and showing ghastly wounds between the folds of the tattered purple cloak! Those hands, tied together and grasping the broken reed, the sceptre of scorn that had been the rod of torture! That whole combination of anguish and misery and abandonment, but illumined all the while with a majestic patience which even such torments could not kill! "Behold the Man!"

Let us too behold the Man, the Victim of cruelty. The heavenly Father points Him out to each of us: the blessed Mother Mary shows Him to everyone. Behold the mirror of divine justice and mercy and of man's ungrateful cruelty! The mirror of God's justice; for it required none less than such a Man, the God-Man, in such woe to give the reparation demanded by divine justice. The mirror of God's mercy; because it was for us and in our stead that the Savior bore those pangs, and "by his bruises we are healed." The mirror of man's ungrateful cruelty; for it was man's sins that wrought

upon His back and tore His beautiful brow.

But that cruelty must one day face its hour of reckoning; for that Man is the Judge who will require His own blood at the hands of men on the day of doom. If on that day of days men cannot give an account of that blood in their regard; if they stand with their souls, which had been washed white in that saving flood, defiled with the foulness of sin and hardened with the hard rebellion of transgression—how will they bear the sight of the awful, awful Christ? With a fear that shall never die they will call upon the mountains to fall upon them and the hills to cover them, and will rush into the flames of perdition, to escape the fire that sears them from the eyes of their Judge, terrible in His righteous wrath.

Behold the Man! It has been said to all the generations of men since then, as they have filed past that tribune beneath the gaze of those blood-dimmed eyes. And many have so beheld the Man, that the sight has strangled the demon of avarice or lust or pride within their souls, and they have hailed Him as their King forever. But many others have passed Him by, and have

given Him no thought—or worse, have cried aloud for His death! Unworthy ministers of the Church have passed Him by, as they clutched the money-bags of simony and corruption. The rich whom selfishness has hardened into stony-hearted egotists, have passed Him by, as they spurned the poor from their path. The poor whom forgetfulness of their thorn-crowned Master has maimed, have passed Him by, as they railed against God and man and sank down into the depths of despair. The votaries of fashion and of pleasure whom sensualism has corrupted, have passed Him by, and have gathered the folds of their silken garments closer about them to escape the defilement of the dirt and blood of His bruised body; aye, they may have cursed Him because His bleeding form came between them and the object of their lust.

Let us look long and well at the Victim of relentless cruelty and see the work of brutality against the Christ. Brutal cruelty! Its evil spirit thrives through the centuries: it lives today. Let us learn to hate it and keep it from our own lives; let us help to lessen its fell results in the lives

of others. The cruelty of lust and pride, as they work against the Master and against the souls of those whom He has ransomed with His blood, we have touched upon sufficiently. But there is, besides, the cruelty of avarice and of thoughtless selfishness, and it counts its victims amongst individuals and nations.

There's the cruelty of unmercifulness towards the poor and helpless, which is heedless of the woes of the little ones of Christ. Mercy is a noble attribute of God Himself; it is the most touching perfection of the All-High, as He stoops from the height of His infinity to the lowliness of our misery: and mercy makes of mortals worthy images of their Father in heaven. But selfishness and whimpering softness may make one so wrap himself in indifference towards others, that he will not pain his eyes with the sight of the sores of Lazarus, nor offend his ears with the groans of the soul-piercing wretchedness of the oppressed outcasts of the race. Such a man does not wish to know; he hugs his criminal ignorance, so that he may not be disturbed in his comfortable egotism.

His extravagant wastefulness might afford the means of sustenance for many a starving wretch. It might turn the wolf from the door of some poor girl, fighting against the seductions of "the easiest way." It might dispel the darkness which hides the affection of heaven from many a broken spirit, that cannot realize the tender love of God, since it has never experienced the true love of men. But the unmerciful egotist turns away from sights of misery, and asks, as Cain dared to ask of the Almighty, "Am I my brother's keeper?" [1] Yes, he is: we all are. We are not isolated units in a separated cosmos: we are brothers and sisters, one of the other, because we are meant to be the brothers and sisters of Christ Jesus.

The men and women who refuse to open the doors of a wide mercy to the burdened ones of mankind are hard with the rigidity of cruelty. They might, possibly, shrink in dismay from the positive infliction of pain; but the quiet permission of sorrows which they might banish if they would, the refusal to lift the loads which they might lighten if they chose—all this, though only negative,

[1] Genesis IV, 9.

since it consists in not doing, is as real a cruelty, as if by their hands the knife were twisted in a mortal wound. It kills.

Moreover, there is a cruelty which sits in gilded homes and dares to hold its head high among its fellows, but which positively does the work of heartlessness and crushes defenceless weaklings. Look at the trembling old women and stunted girls, sewing through the day and into the weary watches of the night, stitching, stitching endlessly, or driving unresting machines, leaden hour after leaden hour, for a pittance to keep the soul and body together in the hopeless struggle against the inevitable end. The sunken cheeks of the aged have lost the roses of health, and the flaccid faces of the young have never known them; for these wretches have been driven by the pitiless lash of the "sweating system" into the shadows of desolate despair. But, they have agreed to the wage? It is a forced agreement: it is not an equal contract: it is a case of trading on the crying necessities of others—and this is out-and-out injustice.

Look at the little children, with faces prematurely old and eyes that have never shone

with the glad light of happy childhood—little children, bent and broken on the wheel of a pagan materialism, destined to be cast away on the scrap-heap of useless humanity after a few years of enforced child-labor have drained their feeble strength. They have never a chance to grow and develop and blossom from the sweetness of childhood into the beauty of maidenhood or the buoyancy of youth. And why? Because the rapacious monster of industrial cruelty laughs at souls and buys bodies at the cheapest rate. In many places, the laws of the land now forbid such gruesome exploitation. But, oh! the cruelty, that should have to face prison bars to be kept from crushing God's children; and which, only too often, still finds means to laugh at civil enactments and to wring gold from ruined souls and bodies!

It is cruelty that makes capital gluttonous: it is cruelty that makes labor inconsiderate. Capital will break men, that fortunes may be swelled; it will drain the heart's blood of the poor and the widow and the orphan, that dividends may be fattened and stocks may soar. Labor will stand un-

moved by the distressing cry of country in the throes of a disastrous conflict, which calls for the forgetting of individual grievances; it will drive the knife into the soul of the nation, if thus it may reach the heart of its hated antagonist. Cruelty has, only too often, debased the relation between capital and labor to the fierceness of jungle hate; it has made uncompromising enemies out of those who should be brothers in the work to which both contribute in common. And the sorry results of this war for wealth are like the ruinous effects of the war of blood.

In addition to all this, cruelty has blasted the souls of nations. It has done it by the adoption of the doctrine of force and the philosophy of brute might, which ignores the soul and makes of the body the toy of superior strength. The ferocity of the "superman" grows into the brutality of the "superstate." Such a deified monstrosity sneers at right as a superstition; it demands that the children of men be fed into the flaming mouth of Moloch, and that multitudes be crushed by the chariot of Juggernaut, in order that *it* may have "a place in the sun,"

and that its *Kultur* may enslave a cringing world. Men? They are flies to be crushed by the wheel of progress, as a deified State rolls on to victory. Families? They are but pawns in the great game of conquest. Nations? If they are stronger, they are to be strangled in the cords of treachery and deceit: if they are weaker, they are to be scourged and crowned with thorns and mocked—for "might is right"!

This is not mad fancy. The tear-stained faces and wounded hearts of thousands in our own land; the desolated towns and cities across the sea; the nameless crosses in the shell-riddled fields of Belgium and France, mutely speaking to a listening world; the shattered manhood and deflowered womanhood of war's unreckoning waste—all these are the bitter fruits which grow on the tree of cruelty.

We shall not dwell upon them, lest unchristian hate defile the peace of "men of good will" and blacken the souls of those who are pledged to follow the scourged and thorn-crowned King of mankind. Let us forget them, if we can. But let us never forget that barbarous cruelty is the mother of

evil, just as it is the hateful offspring of lust or pride or avarice or selfishness.

Back before the Christ let us take our minds and hearts. Let us look on Him, as He stands on the portico of Pilate's palace, gazing down at us through the tears and blood that dim His tender eyes. He speaks to us amid the roar of the hate-maddened mob. His very wounds plead with us. Shall we close our ears to the caressing calling of His voiceless words? Shall we turn away from the sight of His torn flesh, and ruin ourselves by the very sins which He has been expiating in the unspeakable sufferings of those awful hours? Again, God forbid!

If lust calls, may the strength that comes from the vision of that lash-cut body, which sin has wrought upon, crush the demon in our hearts! May we never be found scourging again the God-Man who loved us to the end! If pride would lift us up to the "bad eminence," whence the fall into the abyss is certain, let us not add one thorn to those that pierced His throbbing temples. If avarice or unmercifulness or barbarity in any of its other myriad forms should lure us with siren voice away from the path where

walk the followers of the Christ, let the memory of His anguish-broken Heart, yearning for His loved ones, make us too big for the meanness of selfishness and too high-minded for the degradation of egotism.

We are the subjects of a King, clad in robes of mockery which are reddened with the royal crimson of His own blood, crowned with the thorns of pain and ignominy—our King, by right divine and by right of the conquest of love. And, as we gaze upon Him in His majestic misery, as we "behold the Man," let our faithful love and unswerving loyalty acclaim Him for what He is: "Hail, King of truth and holiness and love! Hail, King of our souls! Hail, King of the world! Hail, King of this earth and of the glorious realms of heaven's blessedness!" In serried ranks before that King let us pledge Him our undying fealty, as it was pledged for us on the day of our baptism when we could not lisp the words; and, in the full realization of our duty and of His rights, let us say: "We renounce Satan and all his works and pomps, and we attach ourselves to Jesus Christ forever." [1]

[1] Baptismal Vows.

CHAPTER VI

THE PEOPLE AND APOSTASY

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not." John I, 11.

"But the whole multitude together cried out, saying: Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas. . . . They cried again, saying: Crucify him; crucify him." Luke XXIII, 18, 21.

"But they cried out: Away with him; away with him; crucify him. Pilate saith to them: Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered: We have no king but Cæsar." John XIX, 15.

The climax of evil is the total turning away from God, the final and decisive casting off of allegiance to Him. It is apostasy. All mortal sin is a form of this dereliction of bounden and loyal duty; for such a sin puts a creature in the place of the Sovereign Lord. But apostasy digs the bottomless abyss of complete desertion of the King of heaven and earth. Since, in our reflections, we have dwelt upon many other sources of wickedness, we must not pass by the consid-

eration of this poisoned font of transgression.

It was of apostasy in particular that St. Paul was speaking, when he said that those who are guilty of it crucify again to themselves the Son of God and make Him a mockery.[1] All the crimes in the catalogue of sin are minor in comparison with this consummated treason, which, even in this life, is almost damnation. Ordinarily, the apostate's fall is irreparable: "when he falls, he falls like Lucifer, never to hope again."[2] "It is impossible," says the great Apostle—that is, it is so hard, and so much against what commonly happens, that it may be called impossible—"it is impossible for those who were once illuminated, have tasted also the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost . . . and are fallen away, to be renewed again to penance."[3]

That is the way in which the people, the Jewish nation, fell away from God—not altogether without hope, but quite beyond the reach of anything except the infinite mercy of the Almighty. They were apostates.

[1] Cf. Heb. VI, 6.
[2] *Henry VIII,* Act III, Scene II.
[3] Heb. VI, 4, 6.

And as the other forces of evil had part in the tragedy of Calvary, so too did this horrible apostasy; and the fallen people of God were the embodiment of this disastrous agency, which did not die after its fight against the Christ, but has gone on through the years doing the work of hell. So, let us close our work of honest love with the consideration of the People and Apostasy.

The scene of the apostasy of the Jews? It was the court-yard before the palace of Pilate. Out before the eyes of the frantic mob the Governor had brought the torn Christ. He had pointed out the Master with the words, "Behold the Man!" and the people's voice of hate had thundered back the cry, "Crucify him!" Pilate had tried to reason with the obstinate rioters; but their only answer to his urging was, "Let him be crucified!" He had again and finally declared the innocence of the accused; but the Jews had shrieked that the Nazarene must die the death, because He was a blasphemer who had made Himself the Son of God. At these words Pilate had taken the Christ within the hall; he had asked Him whence He came; and in fear of condemning one who

might be more than man, he had definitely made up his mind, that the prisoner *must* be released. But when he was about to announce to the crowd this his final verdict, they had threatened him with the Emperor's displeasure, if he allowed an upstart king to play the sovereign beneath the eyes of the representative of Rome.

Pilate was conquered; and he knew it. Forgetful of honor; forgetful of the more than human majesty of the prisoner; forgetful of the warning of his own wife, who had spoken as if from another world and had urged him to have naught to do with this just man; [1] forgetful of all except the lowering brow of the Cæsar across the sea—Pilate knew that he was beaten, and that, to save himself, he would sentence this Innocent One to death.

But as the realization of his disgraceful defeat rushed over his terror-stricken heart, his anger against the Jews, who had conquered him, rose to his brain and made him cast all caution and restraint to the winds. He whipped his conquering enemies with his scorn and hatred, and tormented them with

[1] Cf. Matt. XXVII, 19.

words that stung like lashes and burned like fire. He mounted the steps of the judgment-seat and ordered Christ to be brought again before the sight of all. As the torn and bleeding form of the Master appeared, Pilate said: "Behold your king!" Their answer was: "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" "Shall I crucify your king?"[1] Pilate too was fierce now. He repeated with taunting glee the insult to their pride, and he laughed with bitter scorn, as these triumphant foes of his writhed beneath his words. "Your king! Shall I crucify your king?" And the chief priests, as the representatives of the people, and the people with them cried out: "We have no king but Cæsar."[2] That cry shrilled the apostasy of the Jews, priests and people, from their country, their religion, and their God. With those words fell a nation, the chosen race of the Most High.

The Jews had been separated from the rest of mankind, to keep alive the memory of Him who beneath the shadow of the trees of Paradise had been promised to the world.

[1] John XIX, 14, 15.
[2] John XIX, 15.

They had been loaded with the choicest favors of Almighty God because of their special relation to the Messiah. To them were made the promises concerning the Anointed of the Lord, who was to be of their race, flesh of their flesh and bone of their bone.

The Messiah was the centre of their religion, the reason of their national existence. It was for Him that the prophets had spoken their inspired words: it was for Him that David and Solomon had raised Israel to the height of its glory: it was for Him that Jahve deigned to dwell in the gorgeous pile of marble and gold, which stood as His temple on Mount Moriah. For Him the ages had waited: for Him the holy ones had prayed and sighed: for Him the noblest of human souls had longed, as they pleaded with the Lord, that the heavens might rain down the Just One and the earth bud forth the Savior.

The Messiah meant all to them; but they rejected Him. This rejection was unconsciously begun upon His appearance on the earth, when "he came unto his own and his own received him not." It was continued,

as they claimed Barabbas as their own instead of the all-holy God-Man. It had grown cruel, when they clamored: "Away with this man! Crucify him!" It was impiously consummated, when, with the words, "We have no king but Cæsar," they formally spurned the kingship of the Messiah and the lordship of God Himself. Yes, they denied Jahve; they forswore the Expected of nations; they became apostates from God, as they made themselves traitors to their country.

Treason to one's country is such a dastardly crime, that the souls of true and noble men turn away from the traitor with unspeakable loathing; and the minds of the most tender-hearted admit, that the greatest punishment in the keeping of society is the just meed of such an ingrate and pervert. But, vile as is the treachery to one's land, and deserving as the guilty is of the severest chastisement; the enormity of apostasy is more heinous still and the penalty which it merits is more dreadful, by as much as God is more worthy than country itself of our souls' whole allegiance and our hearts' best love.

Would to God, that apostasy had ceased on that day, when it wrought its will on the Christ in the hour of evil and the power of darkness![1] But it did not die then. It has lived on, doing the work of destruction. It is doing it to-day in individuals and nations.

How many men and women have turned their backs on God! Reference is here made, not only to the equivalent apostasy (which is also equivalent idolatry) of every mortal sin, but to the formal apostasy of those who have thrown off allegiance to God by an explicit rejection of all religion. "Tainted money" was the reason with some; for they could not keep it in their itching palms, unless they forswore God—and they cast Him aside. Forbidden lustful fascination, which was lyingly called love, was the cause why others abandoned Him; for they would not own a lash-torn, thorn-crowned, blood-mantled King, who dared to say: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."[2] Unbounded pride was the step

[1] Cf. Luke XXII, 53.
[2] Matt. XVI, 24.

on which many others slipped; for they would brook no restraint and no correction, even by the accredited ministers of the Lord.

Apostasy? Oh, it is no myth! Have we not known those who broke off all connection with Mother Church for causes which appeared big to pampered selfishness, but which were lighter than chaff when weighed in the balance of God's unfailing truth? And, let it be noted well, apostasy from God's Church is apostasy from God Himself. The Blessed Master said to the Apostles, who were to be the Church that was to continue His work: "He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me. And he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."[1] Yes, an apostate from the Church is an apostate from Christ; and an apostate from Christ is an apostate from the great God.

Yet the heart of Mother Church, as the big, fatherly heart of the Eternal, has been saddened by many such defections. Mere words? No: solid facts! What of those who disdainfully brave the thunderbolts of the Church's excommunication, because, to

[1] Luke X, 16.

the peril and loss of faith and purity, they know better than she what they ought to read? or because they think more of the supposed temporal advantages of condemned secret societies, than of the good will of God Himself? What of those, who not only disregard, but arrogantly and superciliously sneer at the insufferable intrusion (!) of the Church that dares to legislate with regard to marriage, and to safeguard her children and her children's children from indifference to the faith, aye, the absolute destruction of the faith, which cost Christ His cross? What of those who, against the right of the little ones of the Master and the formal and solemn prohibition of Christ's Spouse, deprive their children of their heaven-given dower of a Christian education?

May God keep us from the first steps in the way that leads to entire apostasy from the Church! Let us glory in the sacred privilege, granted to us above so many millions, of being the children of the one true Church of the Master. We are chosen ones, more than the Jews were. Let us not cast away our hallowed prerogative. A child of

the Church! A son or daughter of her who has walked unconquered down the centuries, with her head held high before the face of God, scattering spiritual blessings on the souls of men, and in the plenitude of her tender affection, like the boundless love of her Bridegroom, easing the sorrows of earth, spreading the good things of Christian civilization! How it should thrill our very souls!

We owe no apology to the world for the fact that we are Catholics: we need plead for no sufferance from a disdaining multitude. We are the children of the saints. We are the offspring of the Bride of Christ—and heaven forbid, that we should ever be ashamed of that Mother! There are those who are. There are those who are quite willing deploringly to admit to those who carp, that it is too bad that the Church is not a little more broad-minded in many things; that it is unfortunate that she should insist upon such dead things as dogmas, when all that the world needs is a little considerate stretching of doctrine to accommodate the modern spirit; that it is regrettable that her principles, which offend a progressive

and cultured part of the "best people," should be paraded before scandalized eyes. Alas! it is but the echo of the cry of that first Good Friday, "Away with this man! We have no king but Cæsar!"

Nor are individuals the only ones whose souls have been blasted by apostasy. Nations too have been guilty of social dereliction of the Church, of Christ, of God. Let the words of the Master to His Church be remembered: "He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me: and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."[1] Time was when the nations, as nations, recognized the sovereignty of Christ and the position of His one true Church; but today few are the nations, which as such cleave to that holy Mother and to her Spouse. "Governments, as governments are organized today, know very little of God."[2]

This sad havoc, whose effects are with us now, was not wrought in a day. There were smaller storms of this evil, when the Eastern Schism disturbed the tranquil peace of

[1] Luke X, 16.
[2] P. L. Blakely, S. J., in *America*, Jan. 11, 1919.

Christendom; but the full tempest of black horror burst upon the world in the revolt of the sixteenth century. Then whole nations, in their governments and in large numbers of their members, turned their backs upon the Church of the Master and clamored for her death, whilst at the same time they echoed the cry of the Jews, "We have no king but Cæsar." For, from parts of the universal Church, the Catholic Church, they fashioned distinct, national churches, subservient to the State—and turned away from Christ.

And farther and farther the ghastly evil spread in the separated bodies. Having despised the Church, they came to despise Christ and His heavenly Father. Thus, the seventeenth century saw the apostasy that came from deism, which began with the rejection of God's special providence over the world and ended in scepticism. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed the apostasy that came from materialism and rationalism, which went to the lengths of atheism and its sister, pantheism. They were sowing the storm, and they reaped the whirlwind in the twentieth century, when a

pagan *Kultur* assaulted the very foundations of civilization.

The steps are not hard to trace, if only we open our eyes. Spurning the Church, they spurned her Founder, and despising Him, they despised Him who sent Him. Then from ignoring God they came to adore themselves; and the blinded adherents of a deified State bowed down before it as the source of all rights and the end of all endeavors. State-idolatry inevitably leads to the false and pernicious notion that the citizen "belongs" to the State, that the State is not for him, but that he is for the State. And the outcome of all this? Paternal absolutism, on the one hand; and, on the other, the horrors "which the tribe of eugenists amongst us have borrowed from paganism and the methods of the stock-yard." [1]

If this old world of ours is not altogether in ruins, it is not from anything that came from the saving spirit of this unhallowed apostasy; but because of the principles of truth and uprightness, which were living in the souls of the better ones of mankind, preserved by God's providence and especially

[1] Joseph Keating, S. J., in *The Month*, Dec., 1918, p. 467.

by the watchful guardianship of the dear old Church.

But ruins are there, and the cause of the ruins is lurking in the black background. As we face the problem of reconstruction, let us learn the lessons of the past. As far as we may, let us undo the evils that have come from the apostasy of the nations.

The peoples of the earth, in their social organization, are bound to render social homage to the God on whom they depend. This is as true as it is that the individual man must worship the Deity from whom he has his being. Nations exist by the will of God; the authority by which they work out their destiny is from Him: and therefore they lie under the obligation to express their dependence upon Him and upon His Christ. By right divine and by right of the conquest of Calvary our Blessed Lord is King of the world and has a right to social sovereignty over the nations. His desire, His solemn will is that there should be but one fold and one shepherd for the spiritual regeneration of mankind. This will of His was realized before the apostasy of the nations: it can never be realized again, until

Christ has triumphed in individual souls and in families, which are the units of society. After that, He will reign gloriously and victoriously over the peoples of the world.

Today that triumph of His is not yet complete: and so, as things stand in the divided religious world, there must be some sort of separation between Church and State. This is not the ideal condition: it is not what Christ longs for. Yet, if it must be, in heaven's name let it be a separation which includes reverence for God and respect for the sanctity of the individual conscience, not the propaganda of atheism or of ungodly cult: let it be the separation that exists here in our own loved land, not the farce of separation, which is but a thinly disguised persecution, as in Mexico and France.

Mexico reveled in a debauchery of robbery of churches and in a riot of sacrilegious oppression of the children of Christ's Spouse. France denied to her religious the right, which was theirs as citizens of the republic, to organize and associate. She banished them from their country; but she

summoned them back to fight, when her existence was endangered. They were slanderously named a menace to the State because of their loyal allegiance to the Church and to God; but, because of this loyal allegiance, when their country called they served the State as none others did. The record of one religious order shows, that of its men called to arms ninety-three per cent. won decorations for distinguished service and heroic bravery.[1] Yes, their record and that of others, from the soldier priests and the heroic sisters to the brave Catholic youth of France and to Foch, "the gray man of Christ," gave the same answer as that thrown into the faces of the bigots in our own country: that fidelity to Christ and to

[1] The Society of Jesus. *The Queen's Work* (cf. April, 1919, p. 86), commenting on this fact, quotes the following from the *Cincinnati Enquirer:* "Hear the record" (of the French Jesuits). "When France declared war approximately seven hundred and fifty Jesuits of French citizenship were called to the colors from all over the earth, because they are great missionaries. Only a few, less than fifteen, became chaplains. The remainder donned the uniform of the fighting unit. Of the entire number 112 were killed, 48 wounded, and 20 captured by the Germans, a mortality of fifteen per cent. But this is not all. No less than 490 of the 528 survivors have been decorated or cited for distinction in orders, many nations joining in the awards of insignia of bravery. Taken as a whole, this record is little short of marvelous."

His Church makes for the truest and deepest patriotism.

Religious social unity is the will of the Redeemer of mankind. If we cannot have this social religious unity now, we can at least, in our efforts at reconstruction, build on the solid foundation of Christian principles; and we must do so, because for nations, as for men, "there is no other name under heaven whereby we must be saved," [1] not only for eternity, but for time, than the name of the Lord Jesus.

We are facing a future, in which it is hoped that the League of Nations will make of red-handed war as much of an impossibility as may be possible. A noble hope! But that league, even though possessing the strong right arm of might (which we pray may never have to be called into action), must rest upon the moral law of God, if it is to continue in existence and in effective work towards a longed-for end. To prevent war and to insure the continuance of peace, overreaching ambitions must be restrained; and restrained they cannot be, unless God reigns in acknowledged sovereignty over the

[1] Acts IV, 12.

peoples of the world. "It was the spirit embodied in the Prussian War-Lords, the anti-Christian ethic that sets the State above God and puts national interest before just dealing, that brought about the holocaust" [1] of the world-struggle which crucified the nations. And if the peoples of the earth shriek their apostasy from God in the cry of the Jews, "We have no king but Cæsar," the war beast will not have been killed, but will nurse its hurts until it is strong enough to rend again a helpless universe.

As from the battle-scarred lands across the sea we turn our eyes to our own shores, we must realize that a work of rebuilding must be done at home. The social fabric of the nation is endangered by economic evils which clamor for redress. The destructive war between capital and labor must not go on; the causes of that struggle must not be allowed to sap the strength of the country, if we are to endure. None but the wilfully blind can fail to see that there are glaring and deplorable inequalities, in violation of the principles of right and justice; and these must be remedied. Men can-

[1] *The Month*, l. c., p. 461.

not be treated like machines, without an inevitable revolt. On the other hand, extravagant demands, backed up by the threat of violence, cannot found a lasting peace between antagonists. Nay, if the forces remain antagonistic, instead of becoming allies and brothers, the fires of the volcano are but smothered for a time, and are gathering strength to break out in a fearful eruption.

Unquestionably there are abuses; and Bolshevism is exploiting them, and is clamoring for recognition because of them. These abuses must be removed; and they can be removed—though not by Bolshevism. The unjust inequalities are irremovable only "if there is no moral law and no God of justice behind the law."[1] Human legislation can and should help to do away with the iniquitous exploitation of men by men; but human legislation is not enough. For, "human selfishness cannot be effectually restrained except by God's commandments and their sanction."[2] So long as the apostasy from God lasts there can be no permanent

[1] *The Month*, l. c., p. 464.
[2] *Id. ib.*

and stable rebuilding along the lines of economic reform.

Again, in the work of reconstruction many are calling attention to the need of reformation in educational efforts. Urgently and imperatively is reform called for, though not chiefly in the way proposed by most of its champions. The reform must be *away* from the apostasy from God, that stains the education of most of the schools of our land. Quite generally education is divorced from religion and from God. Now, right here is the place where reform must begin. Not Catholics alone, but many clear-sighted thinkers of other creeds have come to see the absolute necessity of a change in this regard, if our country is to be safe.

Some of the evils arising from this apostasy in educational matters have been mitigated by the fealty to God which is the life-breath of Catholic heroism for religious education. This has directly counteracted some of the disastrous effects of godless training; and it has indirectly helped towards good by its practical protest against a perversion of education into an ignomini-

ous instrument for turning out mere money-making machines.

Without a doubt, reform is needed; but emphatically it is not to be accomplished by binding all educational agencies in the servile chains of an official bureaucracy, which would grind out of existence the only schools that are sowing the seeds of the harvest of national salvation. Several measures, lately proposed before State or national legislatures, are more than dangerous.[1] They are fatal; for they would mean "the complete triumph of education without God."[2]

As we love God and cherish our country, we must see to it, that the most American of all the schools of our land be not strangled by unjust discrimination. The Catholic parochial schools and Colleges and Universities, and similar schools of the Lutherans, the Episcopalians, and the like, are the most American schools to be found from ocean to ocean; because they alone are founded on

[1] Reference is made to measures like the Smith Bill, introduced into the Senate in October, 1918, withdrawn in February, 1919, and again presented in another form (in the House and Senate) in May, 1919.

[2] Cf. P. L. Blakely, S. J., in *America*, Jan. 11, 1919.

the principles of religion, of Christianity—and our nation is a religious, a Christian nation. These religious schools must be unhampered in their work of spiritual and moral development of each future citizen of the commonwealth; "they are part of our contribution as Americans to the true prosperity of our beloved country, and the monument which we raise to the glory of the one true God." [1]

We cannot do without God in our training for life, any more than we can do without Him in life itself or in the death that will close our earthly days. If we try to do without Him, we shall meet the fate of the apostates before Pilate's judgment-seat. For the Jews, since that fateful day, there has been no nation, no church, no country. A people without all these they are, because they threw away their allegiance to their God, when they shrieked, "We have no king but Cæsar." Away, then, with the apostasy of men and nations! Back to God and to fidelity to Christ!

In this return and in this fidelity, the splendidly magnificent example of the

[1] *Id. ib.*

Master is our encouragement and our strength. Fealty to His Father—that was His glory. So His prophet had proclaimed in His name: so He Himself declared: so His Apostle Paul affirmed of Him, when he said: "Wherefore when he cometh into the world he saith: Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not . . . holocausts for sin did not please thee. Then said I: Behold I come . . . that I should do thy will, O God."[1] To do the will of the Father had been to Him as the staff of life. But His work according to that will was not yet done, His sacrifice was not yet accomplished; for the will of His Father led on to Calvary's hill.

When the Jews' words of apostasy had crashed through the air, they had stunned Pilate's soul with the realization of the fulness of his utter failure. To make a quick end of the whole wretched business, from the judgment-seat he uttered the traditional words of sentence, "Ibis ad crucem," "Thou shalt go to the cross." The cross! The last scene of the tragedy of the world was about to be enacted. During it let us keep close

[1] Heb. X, 5–7.

by Christ's side: let us follow Him to the end, whilst He undoes the work of apostasy and shows us the heroism of fidelity unto death, even the death of the cross.

When Pilate speaks the words of doom, it is near midday of that Friday which will live forever. At once the cross is brought forth—that cross which has cast its shadow over the crib of Bethlehem, which has stood out before Jesus in the days of Egypt and Nazareth, which has beckoned to Him and called with the caressing voice of a beloved during the days of the public ministry—that cross which is to be His death-bed and the throne from which He will reign forever. Whilst the executioners lay rough hands upon Him to tear away the robe of mockery and toss His own garments about His lashed body, an officer steps up to the Procurator with the tablet of wood, which is to be carried before the condemned and afterwards fixed to the cross to proclaim the crime for which He suffers. What shall the title be? "Write," says Pilate, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."[1] And

[1] Cf. John XIX, 19.

upon the white surface of the tablet, in letters of red the scribe traces these words in Latin and Greek and Hebrew.

The signal is given; the cross is laid on Jesus; and the procession starts on its way. Out into the roadway sways the mob of priests and people; the centurion and the soldiers close in around the condemned; and they move forward. The Master's hands no longer bear the sceptre of scorn, but hold the cross which lies upon His mangled shoulders. Upon His head there rests that crown of ignominy, that helmet of pain, which pierces Him with its thorny sharpness. Over His face there drips the flow of blood from that crown, there trickles the vileness of the spittle of the soldier mob. As the sad cortège moves on its way, disquiet is felt in the very air; the clouds roll up from the horizon; a palpable gloom is settling down over the city and its environs; the flashing of jagged lightning is answered by the rumbling of distant thunder; and the ground is moving uneasily in the first throes of the coming earthquake.

Poor, lonely, suffering Christ! Around Him, as He stumbles on, are faces distorted

with contempt and scorn and hatred; lips that vomit forth curses and revilings; blood-maddened, hell-possessed hearts that exult in His doom. No one to care for Him! None? Yes, thank God! there are some few. The devoted women lament over Him. His sorrow-stricken Mother meets Him, with the incarnation of love speaking from her tear-dimmed eyes and the heroism of martyr-sacrifice throbbing in her riven heart. Yet—but a long, lingering look, and the Savior totters on.

Out through the western gate He takes His way, stumbling, fainting, falling beneath the cross. On again, with the cross blessing the shoulders of Simon of Cyrene, till the sheer front of the rock of Calvary blocks the way. They turn aside to the west (the fosse where the crosses will later be cast lies to the east), and they come by the north to the rocky plateau which bears the name of Golgotha. There Christ falls, embracing the altar of His sacrifice.

The soldiers lose no time, but go on to the completion of their gruesome work. For the last time our dear Lord's garments are jerked from His lacerated flesh, and He is

placed upon the cross. He nerves Himself for the coming crisis: His tight-drawn lips are compressed with the resolution of heroism, and perhaps again they whisper, "Father, thy will be done!" A large nail, three or four inches long, is placed against the right palm, and with a few strong blows is driven home to the hard wood, tearing its way through flesh and nerve and sinew. The fingers close convulsively about the cruel iron, and the blood trickles down upon the rock beneath. Another nail tears its way through the left hand; two more, through the throbbing feet—and He is fixed fast to the rood. His chest expands in a spasmodic effort to get more air; a quivering shudder passes through His frame, from the thorn-crowned head, through the extended arms and gashed trunk, down to the feet that press in agony against the hard wood. And so—Father in heaven! so, they crucify Him!

Through the angry mutterings of the thunder, through His foes' exultant shouts of demoniac triumph, we catch the sound of His trembling voice. "Father," He says, "Father, forgive them; for they know

not what they do"; [1] and we learn the sacredness of forgiving love and the heinousness of bitter unforgiveness. Again He speaks. It is to the repentant thief on His right hand: and in answer to the prayer for a little thought when the Lord shall have come into His kingdom, He promises to the outcast the joys of heaven on that very day. "Amen, I say to thee: this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." [2]

Down the hillside and back to the city frightened throngs are hurrying through the unnatural darkness. They are casting terrified glances back at the cross, which stands out against the lurid blackness of angry skies: they are gasping with fear, lest the curse of God has fallen upon them. And now, nearer to the cross comes the group of the dying Savior's loved ones—and with them, Mary His Mother. For, "there stood by the cross of Jesus his Mother." [3]

But, oh! the sorrow of His desolate heart, the anguish of her sword-pierced soul! Mary looks up at that form that hangs be-

[1] Luke XXIII, 34.
[2] Luke XXIII, 43.
[3] John XIX, 25.

fore her, mangled, bruised, crushed, gashed, bloody. And Bethlehem rises before her, with the sweetness of His baby love, the beauty of His baby face, the caresses and clingings of His baby hands. Egypt and Nazareth come back to her, with the beloved intimacy between Mother and Boy. That head, torn with the thorny crown, has rested on her breast: those hands, dug with the nails, have clung to her and blessed her: those lips, swollen and discolored, have kissed her and called her by the sacred name of mother. Oh, Father! why have men treated Him so? Why "have they dug His hands and His feet and numbered all His bones?"[1]

In the fulness of His love for her, the virgin Christ gives His Virgin Mother to the virgin Apostle John. And now, it seems that even she is gone from Him, and He has nothing left on earth. No help, no solace, no comfort!

So, He turns His blood-dimmed eyes to heaven and looks up to His Father. But there is no help even there! for He is covered with the sins of the world, an outcast,

[1] Cf. Ps. XXI, 17.

the object of anger in His Father's sight. And as He turns away His weary eyes, the heart-breaking thought appalls Him, that He is alone, all alone with sin. And up from the bleeding heart, out of the anguished soul, through the pale and swollen lips comes the cry, which speaks of an agony as close to the pains of hell as a human soul could go without despair: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"[1] May God forgive us that awful pain, which we caused the dying Christ! For, His soul-tearing dereliction is the price of expiation for our abandonment of God, when we turned away from Him and made some vile satisfaction the god of our being. May the woe of our forsaken Master warm our souls to love and keep us true to Him forevermore!

We are gazing at the beginning of the end. Christ's cry, "I thirst,"[2] tells of the unbearable pangs of the bodily thirst which has burned up His veins from the loss of blood and has flamed up from His untended wounds. But, more eloquently still, it speaks of His yearning for our nearness and

[1] Matt. XXVII, 46.
[2] John XIX, 28.

our love, which He craves and which (please God!) we shall not refuse.

The dying Savior looks back over the long line of prophecies about Himself, and sees that they are all fulfilled. He has done the work which the Father has given Him to do: He has accomplished all but the last detail of the atonement, demanded by God's justice. The agony in the garden, the injustice of the mock trials, the tortures of the bloody outrages at the hands of the soldiers, the rejection by His people, the weary way of the cross, the endless pains of the three hours, hanging on His pierced hands and feet—all these are past. And from His heart well up the words of triumph, "It is consummated." [1]

Faithful unto death, even the death of the cross! He has only to lay down His life, and His sacrifice of redemption will be accomplished. He has taught us how to live: now He will show us how to die. The sun is darkened; the thunder mutters; the ground rocks and sways in the throes of the earthquake; all nature is shaken, as if caught in the agonies of a death-struggle.

[1] John XIX, 30.

And in the midst of it all the dying Master is calm. The agony of dereliction is gone; the Father's anger is passing away. Back of the Father's wrath the well-beloved Son sees the smile of love upon His Father's face—and He will go to Him. Not with the weakness of a man done to his death, but with the strength of the Master of life and death, He will lay down His life when He wills it. With His last breath He will again proclaim His divine Sonship and the mutual love between His Father and Himself. "Father," He cries, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."[1] And a smile comes over the haggard features, like the first gleam of a rainbow after a storm. "Father!" Like a tired child, falling asleep in its father's arms, the dear Christ bows His thorn-crowned head upon His gashed bosom; His sacred, blood-dimmed eyes close to the things of earth; a gasp comes from His heaving breast; a shudder passes over His mangled frame—and He is still, oh! so still! And he gives up the ghost.

Yes, it is over. He is dead. Jesus

[1] Luke XXIII, 46.

Christ, the Son of God, is dead; and the great High Priest of mankind has "entered . . . into the holies, having obtained eternal redemption." [1] He has triumphed over disloyalty and duplicity and time-serving and lust and cruelty and apostasy. He has conquered, not only for Himself, but for His followers, if they will follow Him. And by His tremendous oblation He has won for them the strength to follow, so that they may form part of that great army which will stand by Him under the standard of the cross, when He delivers up the Kingdom to the Father.[2]

Amid the black clouds which lower over the hill, amid the convulsions of nature which split the rock of Calvary beneath our feet and rend the veil of the temple back in the darkened city, that did not "know the time of its visitation," [3] a calm gleam of light illumines that figure on the cross. In the splendor of that light our vision goes back to Bethlehem, where the angels sang in the starry night: "Glory to God in the

[1] Heb. IX, 12.
[2] Cf. I Cor. XV, 24.
[3] Luke XIX, 44.

highest and on earth peace to men of good will."[1] That glory has been given and that peace has been won by the Master, dead upon the cross.

Down the future our vision leaps, and sees the white-robed army of the martyrs, who from the cross will gather the courage to face the wild beasts of the arena and the fiercer cruelty of tiger-hearted men. We see the crowded ranks of confessors and virgins, who will give Christ their all, and will live for Him—which is sometimes harder than to die for Him. We see the heroes and heroines, who in the might of the Crucified will turn away from the joys of earth, to minister to God's abandoned ones, to bring them to their blood-mantled Lover, and to keep them with Him. We see the millions, who through Him will be stronger than the false splendor of earthly pomp and the seductions of fleshly indulgence and the degradation of worldly pride.

And on and on our vision sweeps, until it pierces the veil of eternity, and we behold the glory of the "Lamb that was slain" and

[1] Luke II, 14.

is "worthy to receive power and divinity and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and benediction,"[1] and we glimpse the radiance of the sons and daughters of men, become forever the children of God, bought back from their doom, and made the "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."[2] And as the beauty of the vision thrills our heart of hearts, we bow down before the Victim of sin and the Victim of love, and we say: "We adore thee, O Christ, and we bless thee, because by thy cross thou hast redeemed the world."[3]

[1] Apoc. V, 12.
[2] Rom. VIII, 17.
[3] The Roman Breviary: Feast of *Finding of the Holy Cross*, Noct. II.

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